United Nations A/69/PV.12

General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting

Friday, 26 September 2014, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa . . . . (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pohamba: I am proud to see you, Mr. President, a distinguished son of Africa, presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, and I congratulate you warmly on your election. I would also like to pay tribute to the President of the Assembly at its previous session for his sterling leadership.

This meeting is taking place at a challenging time on the global stage. Several African countries have been dealing with an unprecedented outbreak of deadly Ebola disease; the 200 girls abducted in Nigeria by Boko Haram are yet to be found or rescued; and the indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza ended only a few weeks ago. At the same time, terrorist groups continue to disrupt peace and stability in various parts of the world.

Those challenges are not insurmountable, but overcoming them requires steadfastness and unity. We should therefore resolutely reaffirm our faith and move forward, guided by the enduring values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and all that it stands for. Those values should guide our discussions during this session, including on our theme "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". That theme presents an opportunity for us to pause and reflect on the successes we have achieved and the challenges we have encountered in implementing the ambitious targets set by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The creation of a better world through inclusive development, improved freedom from want, and greater security and prosperity, especially in developing countries, are some of the priorities we agreed on 14 years ago.

In Namibia, the implementation of the MDGs has had many positive results. We have reduced the percentage of our people living in extreme poverty by more than half. Primary school enrolment has reached 100 per cent. Health care is now delivered to many communities where once there was none. The rates of new cases of HIV infection have stabilized. Our coverage of antiretroviral treatment has reached 85 per cent, while the rate of prevention of mother-to-child transmission now stands at 90 per cent. We are moving closer to eliminating malaria as a public health threat, and our provision of clean drinking water and sanitation has also expanded.

Notable successes have been achieved at the global level, too. The living conditions of millions of people

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have improved, especially in developing countries. We therefore have a strong foundation on which to realize the sustainable development goals that are part of the post-2015 development agenda. In that context, urgent action should be taken to meet the basic needs of all human beings and the protection of the natural environment, on which we all depend for our livelihoods. I believe no effort or resource should be spared in addressing holistically the root causes of social strife, poverty and political conflict in our societies.

Developing countries, particularly African and island States, continue to bear the brunt of the adverse effects of climate change. Floods, droughts and soil erosion have become more severe, prolonged and frequent. Namibia therefore calls for implementation of the action programme and the dynamic Windhoek Declaration adopted in 2013 in Namibia at the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

We applaud the Secretary-General for hosting the Climate Summit during this session of the General Assembly. Its outcome should complement the negotiations within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change towards a meaningful and coordinated global agreement in 2015.

Going forward, our discussions and interactions should be guided by the principles articulated in the Millennium Declaration; the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”; and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits on economic, social and environmental matters. It is vital to ensure that the concerns articulated in the African Common Position be fully integrated into the post-2015 development agenda.

As we prepare for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, we must demonstrate the necessary political will and create strong global partnerships to realize our shared goals. Furthermore, we should join hands to ensure effective mobilization and the efficient utilization of public- and private-sector resources at both the domestic and international levels.

The ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations system, particularly the Security Council, must be concluded without further delay in order to reflect the contemporary geopolitical realities.

We remain concerned about the political instability and armed conflicts in South Sudan, Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic. However, the success achieved by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Southern African Development Community, along with the Intervention Brigade, in neutralizing the negative forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is encouraging. In order to further consolidate peace, the voluntary programme for the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of the negative forces must be implemented fully.

Namibia supports the participation of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations around the world. In that context, we call for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Namibia has currently deployed one of the largest female police contingents to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

Namibia continues to call for the lifting of the economic embargo against Cuba. The embargo is contrary to international efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the MDG targets in States Members of the United Nations. The listing of Cuba as a State sponsor of international terrorism is not justifiable and should not be accepted.

We call for the full implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions on Western Sahara and Palestine. The international community must fulfil its obligations and assist the people of Western Sahara and Palestine to realize their inalienable right to self-determination.

Namibia condemns the abduction of more than 200 girls and other innocent people by Boko Haram in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We call for their immediate and unconditional release.

We support international efforts to combat Ebola disease in the African countries affected. Towards that end, Namibia has contributed ND$11 million to the fight against the deadly epidemic.

As prescribed by the Namibian Constitution, I have the honour to inform the Assembly that my term of office as President will come to an end early next year. Therefore, this is the last time that I will address the General Assembly as President of the Republic of Namibia. I would like to thank Heads of State and Government for the excellent cooperation that they have rendered to me and my country during my tenure of office. I trust that they will extend the same cooperation to my successor.

Finally, let us reaffirm our collective political commitment to accelerating the achievement of the MDGs as we move towards the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guyana.

Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ramotar: I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at this year's session. I wish also to commend your predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, and his team, for so effectively setting the stage for what will now follow under your tenure, as it relates to the post-2015 development agenda and other critical issues that warrant the focused attention of the international community.

This debate in the General Assembly is taking place on the eve of the target year set by world leaders in 2000 for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is therefore a timely moment to assess the progress that has been made, and also to understand why we could not achieve all the Goals in full. That is essential if we are to move forward with the post-2015 agenda that we are now about to finalize. I should recall that in 2000, when the eight Goals were announced, they inspired great hope and enthusiasm around the world, particularly in developing countries and among the poor. It is true that we have made tangible progress in our efforts to achieve the MDGs. Global poverty has fallen and continues to fall; many more children are attending primary schools; health services have improved for many people, resulting in a significant decline in child mortality; and the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria has been halted and even reversed in some regions.

In Guyana, despite the negative effects of the international financial situation, we have managed to keep our economy growing steadily over the past eight years. In fact, we have succeeded not only in growing our economy but also in ensuring that the growth has resulted in an improved quality of life for our people. Indeed, we are one of only 17 countries in the world recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for not only meeting the goal of reducing hunger by half but also of improving their people's nutrition. We have achieved universal primary education and are close to achieving universality for secondary education, too. We have also made important strides in housing, health, water and other social facilities. In that regard, I would like to express my country's gratitude to all the development partners that have contributed greatly to the gains we have made in working towards the MDGs. Guyana's success in building its health-sector capacity could not have been possible without Cuba's assistance, which included training hundreds of our doctors, and which Cuba has done despite its own economic difficulties. We would like to join the vast majority of the countries of the world in once more calling for an end to Cuba's economic blockade by the United States.

While we should recognize the gains that have been made around the world, I hasten to point out that they have not been uniform across countries or regions. In some places the progress has been dramatic. Asia, for instance, has had remarkable success with many of the Goals. In Latin America and the Caribbean there has also been considerable progress. There are, however, some areas that have seen almost no noticeable change since 2000. In others, mainly countries ravaged by conflicts and wars, laudable gains have been reversed. Some Goals have also proven more elusive than others. Maternal mortality in particular requires additional attention. It is clear that the world could have advanced much further along the road to achieving the MDGs. Unfortunately, that did not happen, because the partnership needed to achieve every objective was not strong enough. We should therefore examine the reasons for the sub-optimal results.

It is true that we all have a responsibility for the welfare of the people of the world and the state of our planet in general. The reality, however, is that some countries have far more resources than others, and some also use much more of the world's resources. And while our responsibilities are shared, they must necessarily be differentiated. The gaps between the top and bottom segments of the world's population are widening greatly. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few has reached dangerous proportions. Oxfam International recently highlighted this phenomenon, and some figures are startling. Oxfam noted that the richest 1 per cent of the population of the world owns about 46 per cent of global wealth — some $110 trillion — while the bottom 50 per cent owns just about $1.7 trillion, or 0.7 per cent of the world's wealth. That amount, $1.7 trillion, is the same as that possessed by 85 of the world's richest people — in other words, 85 persons have as much wealth as 50 per cent of the world's population. Clearly, such a degree of inequality is unsustainable.

In much the same manner, while we have all agreed on increasing development assistance to developing countries, the reality is that the net transfer of financial resources from developing to developed countries continues unabated, amounting to $200 billion in 2002 and increasing to $557 billion in 2010. That perverse trend continues today. And this transfer of financial resources is only a part of the picture. Developing countries also suffer a net loss of skills to the developed world through migration. That is after the former countries have expended huge amounts on training. In addition, our efforts in the health and education sectors are often frustrated by the high costs of school books and essential medicines, owing to the strictures of intellectual property rights. These imbalances are clearly unsustainable and can be addressed only through concerted global action.

While many developing countries have shown serious determination in working towards the Goals by allocating more resources to human development, the support offered to them by developed countries, as envisaged in MDG 8, has fallen significantly short of expectations. It is extremely disappointing, to say the least, that in the face of pressing needs, only about half a dozen developed countries have kept their pledge to reserve 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance. As we prepare for yet another conference on financing for development, in Ethiopia next year, I would like to remind the Assembly that the commitment of 0.7 per cent was made over four decades ago in this very Assembly, and was reiterated in 2002 at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey.

In the light of those failures, it is imperative that the post-2015 framework include, first, a time-bound commitment for delivering official development assistance on which commitments have already been made; secondly, a global framework for managing intellectual property rights that places the development imperative at its centre; thirdly, a global trading architecture that recognizes the asymmetries in the global state of development and is suitably responsive to them; fourthly, a framework that ensures that private-sector investment is consistent with the development agenda. The recommendations of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing provide a good platform on which to build.

As we craft a transformative agenda, it will be especially important to ensure that it is flexible enough to address the peculiar needs of some countries. The special circumstances occasioned by the vulnerabilities of small island and low-lying coastal developing States bear particular mention in that regard. Far too often, the progress made can be speedily reversed owing to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. We must spare no effort to ensure that we have a legally binding agreement on this matter in 2015.

Ironically, as we discuss the post-2015 development agenda, many Caribbean Community countries are being graduated from eligibility for concessionary financing, since they are classified as middle-income based on the narrow measure of gross domestic product per capita. In addition, many of those countries are heavily indebted, as they must make unavoidable investments in building and rebuilding social, economic and productive infrastructure to strengthen their resilience. We call on the international community to reconsider that approach by adding a vulnerability index to the equation. We also call for debt relief, as the debt accumulated by most of those countries makes their economies unsustainable.

The most important precondition for progress is peace. Many conflicts and potential for conflicts continue unresolved, while new threats to global security have risen to dangerous levels.

The situation in the Middle East is the most disturbing. Still at the heart of it is the great tragedy that is the plight of the Palestinian people. Once again, we have seen the bombing of an almost unarmed population in Gaza by one of the world's most powerful military machines, supported and replenished by even more powerful military forces. Guyana calls for the end of the apartheid-like situation that exists in Palestine, where poverty and degradation are weapons used to repress a whole people. The people of Palestine have a right to live with dignity in their own country, and the United Nations must never compromise on the principle of self-determination.

The continuing wars in Syria and Iraq are most distressing. They are leading to more extremism and a rapid descent into barbarism. That has resulted from years of financing and arming of radical forces to promote political objectives. We condemn the barbaric and grotesque killing of journalists, humanitarian aid workers and other hostages and the loss of civilian lives in those conflict areas by the murderous extremists in those countries. Guyana condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The situation in Ukraine is another cause for concern. We must not forget that the two world wars had their origins in Europe. That is why we should exert every effort to bring all the partners to the table for a peaceful resolution. Attempting to secure military advantages is not only foolhardy but downright dangerous. The solution has to be based on justice and the aspirations of the peoples in that country.

The many unresolved border issues that exist in our world are always a potential source of conflict and are often used to retard the development of countries, preventing them from improving the quality of life of their own peoples and from promoting the welfare of the region to which they belong. My own country is not unaffected by this. The United Nations must therefore redouble its efforts to assist in the resolution of such issues.

We currently face a stark reminder of how fragile global welfare is in the face of singular threats such as the Ebola epidemic. Make no mistake, that is a global problem that requires an immediate global response many times greater what is currently being done. Let me acknowledge the prompt response and leadership shown by Cuba and the United States of America in rendering assistance to the countries in West Africa.

In our time, we must continue the search for new approaches to many of the global problems that confront us. In today's interconnected and interdependent world, the destinies of States and peoples are increasingly intertwined. The concerted global action that is necessary to address today's problems can be achieved only with strong multilateralism and through relevant, responsive and more democratic global institutions.

Critical issues include reforms to the Security Council and the international financial institutions. Concrete progress in Security Council reform is imperative in order to assure the continued legitimacy and relevance of that important United Nations organ. Likewise, accelerated reform of the international financial institutions is critical if we are to ensure their effectiveness in protecting global financial stability and supporting sustainable development.

In conclusion, I would like to recall the proposal that Guyana made through its first democratically elected President, Mr. Cheddi Jagan, for a new global human order, on which the General Assembly has pronounced itself in several resolutions. That proposal seeks to balance the interests of developed and developing countries. It is a proposal whose time has come, and it should be pursued with other initiatives to find solutions so that we can realize the dreams of generations that came before us for peace, progress and prosperity.

Just as the Millennium Development Goals provided a new focus and raised hopes in the year 2000, so today we must rekindle that spirit to eradicate poverty and inequality in the post-2015 period.

Let me express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and the staff of the United Nations for their tireless efforts in carrying out the mandate of the Organization in very challenging times. I assure them that they have the full support of the people and the Government of Guyana.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guyana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Donald Rabindranauth Ramotar, President of the Republic of Guyana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Anastasiades: I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, and I convey my Government's full support in the exercise of your high duties with the shared goal of promoting United Nations principles in a period of great uncertainty and instability.

The General Assembly constitutes the only international forum in which all Heads of States or Governments gather together in order not only to brief international public opinion about serious issues faced by their countries, but to also deliberate on all regional and international challenges that are not country-specific and that call the international order into question.

We should always bear in mind that the United Nations was created with the aim of maintaining international peace and security, thus fostering the effective protection of the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all people, irrespective of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief. For those principles at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations to be upheld, we should all realize that in an era of globalization, all Members of the Organization are bound to be affected, one way or another, by events unfolding in any country or region, although in a dissimilar magnitude and at different times. Therefore joint actions are needed, through a common understanding that despite our individual differences, the path to peace, stability and democracy can be achieved only through the United Nations. Enhancing its role, adhering to the principles of its Charter and implementing its resolutions are a sine qua non for effectively tackling both new and long-standing threats.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The upcoming seventieth anniversary of the United Nations will be a significant milestone in United Nations history. Cyprus believes that it is now the right moment to intensify our efforts and commit ourselves to move ahead through self-assessment and an all-inclusive debate so as to reach a tangible outcome that will strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of the Organization. In that connection, I would like to recall the 2005 World Summit, during which world leaders agreed to an early reform of the Security Council.

A year ago, when for the very first time I addressed the Assembly (see A/68/PV.12), I conveyed my deep concern and indignation about acts that we were witnessing that undermined the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, causing regional and global insecurity, such as terrorism, the annexation of territories via illegal use of force, religious fundamentalism and the forcible displacement of millions of peoples. Unfortunately, despite our efforts, we have to admit that during the past year we have not adequately risen to meet those challenges. It is even more worrying that their extent and impact has been intensified at the expense of human lives, individual and collective social and economic prosperity and, ultimately, regional and international peace and security.

Everything we are witnessing in Libya, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, particularly following the emergence of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and the perpetration of its untold atrocities, should not leave us indifferent or passive. It is our duty towards humankind and our shared values to immediately adopt a more proactive involvement, so as to save future generations from the plague of asymmetrical threats, terrorism and bald hatred. In that connection, we welcome Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), adopted last Wednesday, to decisively address the growing threat posed by the unprecedented flow of foreign terrorist fighters and the growth of facilitation networks fuelling conflicts around the world. We expect that those responsible for the shocking crimes committed in the past few weeks will be held accountable.

At the same time, we should not ignore that deep-rooted and long-standing conflicts possess the ability to instantly ignite regional instability, cause bloodshed and endanger the lives of thousands of innocent civilians, including children. Regrettably, such events sow the seeds of animosity and of further violence that render dialogue and negotiations more difficult to conduct and to eventually bring to success.

Specifically with regard to the Middle East peace process, the right of the Israeli people to statehood should not be called into question, nor should the same right for the people of Palestine. We commend the very positive role of the Egyptian Government in mediating between the two sides. At the same time, we strongly urge all interested stakeholders to discourage the activities of terrorist groups that oppose the Middle East peace process.

Furthermore, we cannot remain indifferent to what is taking place in Ukraine and the repercussions on the relations between some of the most important and influential actors in the world arena — the United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union. We welcome the agreement reached in Minsk on 5 September, and we call for it to be honoured and fully implemented by all sides.

Of course, above and beyond those regional conflicts, we should be vigilant and remind ourselves that other conventional and unconventional challenges pose existential dangers that we have yet to tackle. Those include, among others, human trafficking, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and global poverty, hunger and distress, which intensify migration flows and create demographic changes and the spread of epidemic such as the recent example of Ebola. Moreover, the effects of climate change could eventually, in the distant future, turn out to be irreversible and catastrophic.

Cyprus lies at the crossroads of Europe, North Africa and the Near and Middle East, a volatile region in which most conflicts take place. However, we take pride on being a member State of the European Union (EU) and in enjoying excellent relations with all our neighbours. Hence, we are considered to be an honest broker with no hidden agendas. We do realize that our geography is our destiny. We have assumed a constructive role in upholding United Nations values and principles and are contributing to peace efforts in our region, always, of course, within our capabilities.

We are at the forefront of efforts to fight terrorism, human trafficking and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to provide humanitarian aid and facilities when deemed necessary. Only yesterday, Cyprus was instrumental in rescuing around 350 Syrian refugees from a fishing boat stranded in the Mediterranean, thus averting a great humanitarian catastrophe.

The discovery of hydrocarbons in our neighbourhood has undoubtedly upgraded its strategic importance. Energy can serve as a catalyst for broader cooperation, thus contributing to peace and stability. and can be a means to strengthen regional and EU energy security and diversification. That would boost the economies of the countries in the area. We are ready to contribute toward that cause and even to mediate to bring together neighbouring hydrocarbon-producing and hydrocarbon-consuming countries.

The year 2014 marks the fortieth anniversary of the violent division of my country as a consequence of the 1974 invasion and continuing occupation by Turkey. It is not my intention to engage in a blame game, as a plethora of United Nations resolutions and Security Council decisions not only truly reflect the historic and continuing responsibilities of those who are at fault, but also condemn the unacceptable status quo and call for the reunification of Cyprus and the withdrawal of occupation forces.

What I would like to stress once more is my sincere commitment to working vigorously and with resolve to reach, through a constructive, in-depth and substantive dialogue, a settlement that will reunite Cyprus and its people, restore the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all its lawful citizens, relieve the island of the presence of occupying troops, ensure peaceful coexistence and socioeconomic collaboration among all its citizens, and guarantee the effectiveness and efficient functioning of Cyprus as an EU member State.

For me, there is only one plan, and that is to reach a settlement of the Cyprus problem on the basis of what has been agreed as a compromise: the evolution of the Republic of Cyprus into a bicommunal, bizonal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions and the high-level agreements, with a single sovereignty, a single international legal personality and a single citizenship.

After months of difficult negotiations, a joint declaration was agreed between the two communities on 11 February 2014, setting out the basic guidelines and principles for reaching the framework of the agreed solution, as well as the methodology of the negotiating process. At the same time, it is extremely important that the joint declaration clearly articulates that the shared, sole purpose of the negotiating process is to end the unacceptable status quo and reach a settlement that will safeguard and respect the principles upon which the European Union is founded. Following the joint declaration and intensive negotiations between the two sides, comprehensive proposals on all chapters of the Cyprus problem have been submitted. We have now reached the phase of concentrating our efforts to bridge the differences so as to pave the way towards a viable, lasting solution.

I wish to take this opportunity to warmly welcome the Secretary-General's recent appointment of his new Special Adviser, Mr. Espen Barth Eide. We believe that that appointment at this critical juncture in the negotiation process demonstrates the United Nations' determination to ensure that that process moves decisively forward. However, it goes without saying that what is also needed is a demonstration of a genuine will by our compatriots to negotiate in good faith and by Turkey to contribute constructively to the efforts to reach a settlement, not only in theory and rhetoric, but through practical and substantial actions.

A first step towards the long-awaited demonstration of genuine political will would be the adoption of my package proposal for bold confidence-building measures that would create a win-win situation for all parties concerned, helping to build mutual understanding, confidence and good will and thereby serving as a catalyst for the ongoing negotiating process. Moreover, we expect Turkey's sincere cooperation on the humanitarian issue of missing persons, including through granting access to all areas as required and providing the necessary information that will help shed light on their fate and alleviate the pain of their relatives.

Cyprus and its citizens deserve much more than a divided country. Forty years is more than enough for all of us. It is high time for all those involved to realize that the artificial complacency with regard to the status quo benefits no one. A solution would benefit all Cypriots, Turkey, our immediate region and the international community. My ultimate vision is to relieve all Cypriots, especially the younger generation — the future of the country — of the anachronistic burden of having to live in a divided country in which they are forcibly prevented from enjoying the freedoms that are the birthright of every citizen in the world — a burden that they are not to blame for and are entitled to see redressed. I will not deviate from pursuing that vision, as that is the duty I have undertaken towards all Cypriots. Nor will I shy away from the historic responsibility to provide a stable, peaceful and prosperous and conciliatory future in my country.

It would be a serious omission if, before concluding, I did not extend the sincere gratitude of my people and my Government to the Secretary-General and the Security Council for the work of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus over the past 50 years, which constitutes a prime example of the successful role that the United Nations can play in peacekeeping. While we greatly value the benefits of peacekeeping and the role played by the United Nations to that end, we consider that it is even more important to support and empower the Organization to continue its work towards peacemaking, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, particularly with regard to new and emerging threats. On my country's behalf, I want to assure the Assembly that we will continue to offer any help deemed necessary to achieve those noble objectives.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

Address by Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

> *Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Grybauskaitė: Today, numerous outbreaks of armed conflict and instability in the world make us look back at the main cause and purpose of the United Nations — to keep peace throughout the world. As States Members of the United Nations, we are all committed to that core principle. With the danger of terrorism and war spreading throughout the world, now is the right time to stop to reconsider our actions and to do everything possible to bring an end to fighting, be it in our own homelands, neighbouring countries or in our regions.

The nature of global security has changed dramatically. We are seeing non-State actors, religious fundamentalists and rebellious criminal gangs terrorizing the globe and threatening the safety of peaceful people. Sadly, some States are standing behind the terrorists and have become hubs and shelters for growing violence. But nowadays, the means of terror and war go far beyond the traditional concept of a lethal fight. Whatever the means of terror used, its goal is the same — to frighten people, countries and, in some cases, the entire world.

Peaceful and sustainable coexistence among countries and within societies is not a self-evident fact. It requires collective efforts and determination and national commitment to a sustainable future that belongs to all of us. Our common task as a group of nations is to maintain undivided security — we must use all our efforts to stop the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida in order to maintain peace and security in Middle East, but the same efforts need also to be deployed to manage the geopolitical challenges in Eastern Europe.

It is our duty to support the peace, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. The threat arising in Ukraine must be urgently tackled. The United Nations, together with NATO, the European Union and other regional organizations and their member States, should fulfil their duty and do everything possible to stop armed conflicts, prevent the redrawing of the borders of sovereign States and stop the creation of one frozen conflict after another.

We have to act together as a group of neighbours, a group of States concerned about the future of the international community, the future of the world in which we live. It is very important to stop a conflict at its inception and to suppress the breeding grounds of terrorism, wherever they may be found. But most important, we should never abandon the values that hold us together, namely, respect for human rights and the fundamental principles of State sovereignty and, naturally, territorial unity.

When it comes to the protection of those fundamental common principles, the international community should be united and react responsively to any breach thereof. The fact that we continue to protect core values was well illustrated by the voting results on resolution 68/262, on the armed conflict in Ukraine. One hundred States supported Ukraine and condemned the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. An overwhelming majority of the Assembly will never recognize such illegal acts of aggression.

If we fail and if violence, aggression and terror win, we are at risk of waking up on the threshold of a situation where everyone fights everyone else and chaos prevails. Everything we have worked for, everything we have created — the world we live in — will be destroyed. Silent consent to such brutal forms of aggression should not be the international community's answer.

To avoid an even grimmer future, I invite the Assembly to keep deception, lies, manipulation and ignorance from entering our territories and violating our values. We have to go back to the core principle of the United Nations, that is, to keep peace throughout the world. Our undivided attention to maintain undivided security should be our main focus.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ouattara (*spoke in French*): Like the other Heads of State and Government who preceded me at this rostrum, I, too, would like, on behalf of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire and on my own behalf, to extend to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session and to assure you of our full support throughout your mandate. Your election to this post does honour to your country, Uganda, and, beyond its borders, to the entire African continent.

My congratulations also go to His Excellency John Ashe, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, for his outstanding guidance of the work of the Assembly throughout the past year. I should like in particular to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his dedication to the objectives and ideals of the Charter of our Organization.

Now that the stage has been set and the ground prepared, as we were urged to do at the sixty-eighth session, the time is now ripe to translate into reality our commitment and our vision of a world free from the ravages of the poverty and vulnerability that still affect millions of individuals.

I welcome, therefore, the relevance and the scope of the theme of this session, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", which is taking place in the framework of the continuation of the previous session and reflects our commitment to meet together the challenge of development.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in September 2000, and one year before the deadline for their implementation, it should be noted, as rightly stressed by the Secretary-General in his recent report, that the main objectives have been, or are in the process of being, achieved on a global scale and that considerable efforts will be needed in order for regions such as sub-Saharan Africa to in their turn succeed in doing so.

At the national level, thanks to the efforts of my Government, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals is tirelessly being pursued within the framework of the implementation of the national development programme and the strengthening of cooperation with our partners. We will use the time between now and the deadline of the end of 2015 to accelerate efforts to reduce poverty, improve maternal and child health, consolidate the remarkable progress made in the fight against HIV/AIDS and concerning access to primary education, and, finally, ensure access to clean drinking water for all of our compatriots.

In the past three years, Côte d'Ivoire has made a significant qualitative leap forward in the implementation of the MDGs and intends to continue with that same dynamic process. We entered the twenty-first century determined to conquer poverty and inequality, and to build a world of opportunity. The MDGs have been the vehicle for this great ambition and the impetus for a solidarity of the kind rarely expressed in this forum. At a time when the world that we wish to see post-2015 is taking shape, the MDGs are becoming clearer. We must finally give the most vulnerable peoples a decent life; we must also give our planet a reprieve and the opportunity to exist for centuries to come.

The post-2015 agenda should pay particular attention to the priorities of the developing countries, particularly those of African countries, as set out in the African Common Position, which my country supports. The intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda should therefore be inclusive and balanced and achieve specific, measurable objectives so as to facilitate their ownership by States and regions.

The adoption of the post-2015 development programme next year will take place in a favourable economic context for Africa. Indeed, Africa has become one of the most attractive regions for international investors and one of the most dynamic in the world, with the annual growth rate of its gross national product at 4.5 per cent on average over the past 15 years. Africa offers unique opportunities in the areas of infrastructure, energy, agriculture, employment and the capability of ensuring food security for the continent. The health sector and that of combating climate change are also active.

Africa is entering an era of progress and development that will depend on its security environment. Indeed, the unprecedented spread of terrorism from the Horn of Africa to the Sahelo-Saharan area, the explosion of maritime piracy, various types of criminal trafficking, and, more recently, the resurgence of pandemics such as Ebola haemorrhagic fever, which has been ravaging certain countries in West Africa, are threatening the African continent and risk making it lose a decade of human progress and economic growth. Unlike the wars of yesteryear, these trans-border threats will in the long term spare no State and no region. That is why we must face them collectively.

The current international mobilization against terrorism and extremism is very positive. However, it would benefit from being extended to Africa in order to sustainably destroy the terrorist movements that are now active at the doors of Europe. Africa must not be the forgotten continent in the fight against terrorism.

I know that Africa is not alone in facing these threats. I would like to reiterate here my sincere gratitude to our bilateral and multilateral partners, including France, the United States of America, the United Nations, the European Union and the African Union, which all are by our side. I should like in particular to thank President François Hollande for the decisive role played by France in the resolution of the crises in Mali, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic, as well as for the convening of the Elysée Summit for Peace and Security in Africa and the recent conference of heads of State on the question of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

I wish to thank President Barack Obama for the important measures he announced in August at the United States-Africa Summit, which will help to strengthen African capacities to combat terrorism. I also wish to thank him, and, through him, the American people for the bold, outstanding measures taken by the Government of the United States of America to help West Africa to overcome the Ebola epidemic. Those measures, in addition to those taken by the World Health Organization, non-governmental organizations, France, the United Kingdom, the World Bank, Japan, the European Union and other countries, must serve as an impetus for an international mobilization.

In the same spirit, I would like to acknowledge the support provided by the international community to the brotherly country of Nigeria in its fight against the terrorist group Boko Haram, and commend the African Union for its decisive involvement in Somalia. The fact remains that, with respect to the Sahel and the fight against Boko Haram, the major Powers and the United Nations need to go further in their support for the continent and show the same determination as that has been demonstrated by France against the terrorists in northern Mali.

For Africa, security is the primary sustainable development goal that must be achieved. In the quest for stability and security, the consolidation of the continent's various partnerships is a true lifeline to the future. Those partnerships also provide solidarity, openness and development. They must ultimately enable us to pursue together the fight for the eradication of poverty, while taking into account the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

Sustainable development is inclusive, and that is what we want for our people. In that respect, I recall the need to focus on developing methods for cleaner production and for reversing the current trend of global warming. In the light of the pronouncements we made at the Climate Summit, held on 23 September here in New York, a final effort will certainly be needed to reach an ambitious climate agreement in 2015 at the Paris summit.

I would like now to turn to the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. My country is at peace and at work. It has regained its partners' trust, as shown in particular by the definitive return of the African Development Bank to Abidjan. Thanks to the unity of Ivorians, the strength of our national institutions and the reforms undertaken by the Government, economic growth continues to be strong and is close to reaching double digits.

At this stage in my country's path towards economic transformation and inclusive development, the major work that remains is that of strengthening national reconciliation and caring for and protecting the most vulnerable of my countrymen. That will involve, fundamentally, restoring meaning to the concept of solidarity and the national pact underpinning the Ivorian nation. Today, Côte d'Ivoire is an ambitious nation that has set a course towards democratic institutions and exemplary governance.

Let me conclude by highlighting that a better world for all is possible. We all need to believe in it and work with determination to achieve it. The sustainable development goals will be achieved if national efforts are supported by the expected level of official development assistance, the level to which the developed countries have committed. The post-2015 development agenda will be an asset that will enable our countries to meet the challenges our people and especially our youth will face in a changing world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pahor: Slovenia is among the vast majority in the international community that desire and strive for a lasting peace. However, the precondition for that is the peaceful resolution of all disputes. The United Nations was founded mainly to serve precisely that purpose, and that goal has often been achieved. Within the contemporary international community, the United Nations remains a very important tool for maintaining and strengthening world peace.

However, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, force is still being used in today's world. There is even a strong feeling that, owing to new circumstances, the existing architecture of the United Nations — and above all the Security Council — is failing in that fundamental role. Long ago, a debate began on the reforms that were needed, but thus far, it seems to have resulted in no decisive changes.

Hence, a sense of uncertainty about future stability and peace is gaining ground among the peace-oriented States of international community. If the United Nations is not reformed so that it can successfully cope with international conflicts, it risks being sidelined. Increasingly, deadlocks in the Security Council — which have sometimes come about for good reasons, but sometimes not — are taken as an excuse for resolving conflicts by force and without a United Nations mandate. If that trend continues, it may lead to the breakdown in the contemporary political and security architecture. It is our common task to remedy such problems rapidly, thoroughly and by consensus, especially with regard to the functioning of the United Nations and the Security Council; otherwise, it may be too late.

I suppose we all agree that a reformed and effective Security Council is needed, with its permanent members exercising their powers responsibly and in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We have to use this opportunity to rethink the international security architecture, improve our capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts and reclaim our shared values and principles, which are enshrined in the Charter. With numerous ongoing conflicts around the world, we will have to do so before international peace is undermined.

I cannot deny that, at times, in the absence of other means, specific circumstances may compel the international community to maintain peace by the use of force. Sometimes it is so. Nevertheless, a United Nations mandate is essential to ensure credibility, at least in principle. If, however, intervening without a United Nations mandate becomes the principle, the world will certainly arrive at a point where an arbitrary action may trigger a conflict of broad dimensions. I think there are no moral grounds for such risky behaviour.

A comprehensive United Nations approach is also needed to address the global threat emerging in the broader Middle East and North Africa: the threat of terrorism, extremism and a militant radicalism that is distinctively different in its strategic approach and methods of operation. We all have to condemn that threat in the strongest terms and fight against it in a concerted manner, bearing in mind the framework of the mandate given by the Security Council. Because of the importance I accord to the Security Council, I would like to reiterate my support for Security Council resolution 2174 (2014) adopted two days ago, which was endorsed by more than 100 States.

Although the debate on the reform of the Security Council has been going on for decades now, it has recently become especially relevant. My country, Slovenia, is committed to contributing to that debate to the greatest extent possible.

Let me finish by saying that, while the vision of a world of peace may remain unfulfilled, the ideals that led to the establishment of the United Nations almost 70 years ago and the need to preserve our humanity remain. Let us pool our resources and ideas. Let us exert leadership, make the necessary reforms and recommit to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Let us re-establish dialogue and rebuild the trust we need so much. That is the only way forward to maintain global order on the basis of international law and leave a lasting legacy to the people and nations of this world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Condé (*spoke in French*): Fourteen years ago, in this very Hall, the international community, in a promising move, pledged to attain a series of common goals by 2015, essentially, to eradicate poverty and achieve a prosperous and shared world in a secure environment. Now, one year before that deadline, we must recognize that humankind has not been able to create all the conditions necessary for the development we aspire to. The very foundations of our Organization are likely to be shaken if steps are not taken to deal with the immense challenges facing us.

Poverty always goes hand in hand with major pandemics, undermining any glimmer of hope for the decent life to which our people are entitled. Humankind's aggressiveness towards the environment pushes it out of the balance that is essential for its growth and for sustainable development. Fundamental rights are still being trampled on, opening the door to intolerance, frustrations and social crises. Peace and security are faltering in many countries, threatening more than ever the stability of our planet. It is clear that only a comprehensive and cooperative approach will lead us to a society free of the defects that prevent true progress.

In congratulating the President of the Assembly on his election, we would like to state that he is without a doubt contributing to the momentum for a new global partnership, which we have all been hoping for and which is so crucial. Today, we wish to assure him that we will provide him with the same kind of unfailing support that we provided to his predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe, to whom we pay tribute for his leadership in seeking solutions to our issues of concern. I must address the issue of the serious health and humanitarian crisis that Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea are currently facing. As members know, the Ebola virus, a disease characterized by haemorrhagic fever, continues to threaten international security. Since its most recent appearance in March 2014, it has caused over 2,500 deaths and continues to cause victims. Health-care workers have not been spared.

Faced with the spread of the epidemic, an extraordinary summit of heads of State and Government of the Mano River Union was held in Conakry on 1 August. The summit adopted a common strategy for fighting the disease and made an urgent appeal to the international community for a coordinated global response. At the national level, my Government declared a health emergency on 13 August. The quarantine line was reinforced by the establishment of compulsory medical checks at all border crossings and crossing places in the country, in particular airports and ports.

The negative impact of the Ebola virus on the country's economy can be seen in the decrease in trade, productivity and activity in the transport, investment and tourism sectors. To date, Guinea has suffered a loss of nearly 2.5 per cent in the growth forecast for gross domestic product. That loss could increase if adequate measures are not taken in time to stem the epidemic. There have been other adverse consequences for the affected countries, in particular in terms of borders being closed, the free movement of persons hindered, flights cancelled and nationals of the States affected by the disease stigmatized.

The Ebola epidemic reminds us of the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to contain and defeat this terrible disease. We must isolate Ebola, not countries. We must counter the irrational panic that has gripped the world. Ebola is a very serious epidemic, but it is not a death sentence. Ebola can be cured.

We therefore welcome the fact that several African Heads of State have joined President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita of Mali and the King of Morocco, to whom I pay tribute, and France and England, as President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo and President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon have decided to lift the ban on flights and the use of airports. I thank them.

In my capacity as Acting Chair of the Mano River Union, I would like to welcome the appointment of the United Nations System Senior Coordinator for Ebola Virus Disease and pay tribute to the work of the World Health Organization, the United States Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Médecins sans Frontières, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other bilateral and multilateral partners who are sparing no effort to support coordinated action by the affected countries to eradicate the Ebola virus.

My Government welcomes with genuine satisfaction Security Council resolution 2177 (2014), which was co-sponsored by 134 Member States and adopted unanimously by the members of the Council, and resolution 69/1, on the establishment of a United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. I welcome the spirit of solidarity that continues to be shown to the countries affected by the epidemic and express our gratitude to all States and organizations that have assisted us. I thank in particular President Obama, President François Hollande and the Secretary-General for their support and their call to action to all the countries of the world.

Our countries have urgent needs that must be met to further boost our efforts to fight effectively against Ebola. Those needs are in a variety of areas, including strengthening our infrastructure and health systems and increasing the number of health-care workers and financial, material and logistical support, as the gaps in those areas inhibit our efforts. Promises are nice, but there is an urgent need for action on the ground. The faster we act, the better chance we have of stopping the disease.

Sustainable development remains the cornerstone of the harmonious development of humankind. The international community has an obligation to end the poverty that still grips almost 2 billion people, most of whom live in Africa. Beyond the economic and social concerns, it is a matter of human dignity. It is a matter of justice and fairness. We therefore do not have the right to back off, much less to give up.

Certainly, progress has been made, if unevenly, towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Illiteracy has been pushed back, although efforts are still needed to achieve the quality and equality required in the pursuit of knowledge. The essential role of women in transforming society has been further enhanced. However, family health and access to water, basic health care and social protection deserve further investment and political commitment. Worse, the digital divide has been slow to show any improvement, for lack of an adequate policy of ownership or transfers of science and new technologies. However, encouraging results have been achieved in the fight against malaria and HIV/AIDS despite the spectre of the disease, which still haunts the lives of millions of people who do not have access to antiretroviral medicine.

The many challenges facing our world require an urgent, comprehensive and coordinated response. In the collective quest for well-being, Africa in particular has seen renewed growth, but it is having difficulty in translating that growth into a true engine for development. Eradicating poverty is an uphill battle. The new Africa that we aspire to should promote structural changes that enable it to acquire robust and diversified economies so as to guarantee reinvestment in value-added and environmentally friendly industries in future.

In that context, the Climate Summit held on the sidelines of the current session has provided hope that a binding agreement will be adopted at the international conference to be held in Paris in 2015. It goes without saying that those measures will build on the foundation of a vibrant private sector that is underpinned by strong institutions that guarantee good governance, which is itself the crucible of inclusive development.

That is why, despite the backdrop of a relentless systemic crisis and the scarcity of external resources because of unfulfilled commitments, Africa will be able to enter into the international system, gain confidence and increase intra-African trade to influence the flow of world trade. That is also why our continent will, relying primarily on its own strength — and that is extremely important — be able to become less vulnerable and build resilience through coherent strategies and the search for innovative financing to accelerate its full potential.

Recognizing all those challenges, Guinea has made a decisive commitment to promoting democracy and the rule of law, which are the foundation for sustainable development. In doing so, since our assumption of the country's leadership in 2010 we have taken measures that affect all areas of our national life. The reform of the defence and security sector ensures that our armed forces are at the service of the Republic and increases their participation in the development process and in peacekeeping in the world. The independence of the judiciary is now ensured. Our stabilized and competitive macroeconomic framework strengthens Guinea's credibility at the international level.

Guinea has been admitted to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and today has one of the most attractive mining codes. Even better, the review of all contracts allows us to make the environment safer for investors and ensures a development process that benefits Guineans while preserving our ecosystem.

Of course, the development of the mining sector will rely on promoting agriculture to ensure our food security and to pass on to future generations the resources needed to shape to the world they hope for. The growth we aspire to will be even more promising as it creates decent jobs for our youth and empowers women — two sectors of society that constitute the rich and inexhaustible source of all progress.

Our unquenchable desire to ensure the well-being of our people can be fulfilled only in a stable environment that is free from crises and conflicts. Multilateralism, which is the only way to realize our goals, is imperative, since our States, whether big or small, strong or weak, are determined to contribute to building a more just and equitable global society within a reformed United Nations that is responsive to the needs of humanity. In that context, Africa, the continent that is the most affected, will shoulder its responsibilities by pooling its efforts through greater regional integration, which is an essential element of a global partnership leading to a more dynamic and pragmatic peace.

That is why we must be more involved in the struggle against terrorism, extremism and intolerance and the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which fuel cross-border crime and maritime insecurity — the numerous scourges that hinder development. The time has come to be the true builders of our destiny. The rule of law, respect for all human rights and good governance remain intangible realities that we must promote. Likewise, the implementation of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the ability of Africa to respond quickly to crises will strengthen our credibility with regard to stabilizing the continent.

I should like to stress in particular the unacceptable suffering that our Palestinian brothers are experiencing. Guinea has always clearly and unambiguously expressed its unconditional solidarity with the just Palestinian cause and firmly condemns the heinous acts committed by Israel in the Gaza Strip, which is now suffering under the yoke of a cruel and vile embargo. My country remains convinced that any viable and lasting solution to the situation in the Middle East hinges on the creation of two States living side by side within secure and internationally recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders.

We will soon have the opportunity to take stock of the Millennium Development Goals. On the eve of that meeting and bearing in mind that we decided, at our sixty-eighth session, to set the stage for the sustainable development goals, it is clear that the implementation of those legitimate goals remains dependent both on the appropriate means for its implementation and on whether the priorities of poor countries, in particular African countries, are taken into account.

That is why Guinea, which has a member on the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, calls for greater attention to be given to the African Common Position on the post-2015 development agenda. That is all the more relevant since, if Africa does well, the world will do better. The new Africa — more ambitious and more promising and aware of its human and economic potential — is now ready to assume its responsibilities.

I again thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has devoted all his actions and energy into forging an adequate response on the part of the United Nations to all the challenges we face. He deserves our gratitude and respect. There is no doubt that his efforts will chart the course for the indispensable reform of the international system, so that the United Nations will be true to its original objectives of promoting peace and security and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in a world of democracy, equity and progress for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sánchez Cerén (*spoke in Spanish*): I am proud to represent a small but great nation, El Salvador, before the Assembly. Our history has been full of painful moments, but also times of hope and courage. For years, we struggled to achieve democracy. We marked a historic global milestone when we became the first country in the region to end a painful civil war through dialogue and reconciliation in order to begin to build a democratic country.

Like most developing countries, we face the familiar challenges of reducing poverty and social inequalities and building the conditions needed for families to have healthier and safer lives. Experience has shown us that it is only through solidarity, respect, inclusion and equity that we can overcome those challenges. In recent years, we have made significant strides in human development. In rural areas, we have reduced extreme poverty to 13.6 per cent; we have allocated 14.8 per cent of our gross domestic product to social spending; and we have raised primary education coverage to 93.7 per cent and reduced illiteracy by a little over 5 percentage points. We have achieved an important reduction in maternal mortality, and we have improved sanitation services and access to drinking water for the population.

We have witnessed significant changes, and just as we did 14 years ago at the Millennium Summit, we are working on the parameters that will lead us to a more just and equitable world. However, our debt to humankind remains. We continue working to create factors that can enhance our human development and provide stronger social protection, which will allow us to ensure universal access to basic social services on a sustainable basis.

We are one year away from the most important world summit in our history, where we will evaluate the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular the goals that have been achieved, and where we will define the new post-2015 development agenda, based on a new comprehensive, transformative and inclusive development paradigm. We believe in a vision for development that meets the needs of our peoples, in which all human beings have a full and dignified life, living in democracy and enjoying the right to sovereignty and determination and the right to choose our path towards peace and development. The new agenda must integrate universal issues, such as migration, climate change, food security, education, health, public safety and world peace. We must not keep repeating the errors of the past. Based on the experience of the MDGs, we must reduce the inequality gaps and the structural causes of poverty and exclusion.

The new global agenda requires us to come to an agreement on how to face the great threat of climate change, which afflicts us with hardships and limits the opportunities for families to live with dignity. The next few months are key for the establishment of a road map to implement the parameters of the new development paradigm. We must work together, using an approach based on shared but differentiated responsibilities.

It is urgent to amend the existing financial architecture and international cooperation mechanisms so that they meet the needs of our peoples with effective institutions and transparent mechanisms. We must renew the terms under which development assistance is granted, review its amounts and ensure the implementation of procedures that facilitate the principles of sustainable development. The new development indicators should make exclusion and inequality visible. To that end, measurements must focus on whether needs are met and opportunities provided. The objectives and goals should address personal fulfilment and our right to the pursuit of happiness as much as the economic growth of countries.

I call upon the United Nations to maintain its resources and programmes in Latin America, and in particular in Central America, regardless of the macroeconomic classification of our countries. To reduce the United Nations presence would only exacerbate the serious economic and social inequality problems suffered by the region.

Financing for development is vital for the implementation of the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda. I reaffirm the resolution adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Central American Integration System (SICA), which stresses that financing for development should be based on the priorities of the countries concerned, making use of innovative financing mechanisms. We must explore new sources, such as the resources found in offshore areas, a global asset to which only a handful of countries now have access. El Salvador expresses its commitment to the new global alliance for development, based on the Monterrey Consensus, the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development and the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex).

Much work still lies ahead. However, countries will not be able to accomplish that work unilaterally, but should rather take action within the framework of the United Nations. We must also unite to advance the reform process of the United Nations, especially since we need a strengthened and renewed Organization. We need a General Assembly, the main forum for global debate, with an agenda focused on the most pressing issues of the international community, and a Security Council open to increased representation and participation by all Member States. We call for the strong support and political will of all Member States, so that we can have an Organization that can provide timely support in the face of the new challenges posed by history. In the context of those global challenges, our Government reaffirms its call for a comprehensive and inclusive development agenda for social peace, capacity-building and consensus-building across sectors.

In recent years, my country has launched a transformation process that focuses on sustainable development, the fight against poverty and the reduction of inequality, exclusion and social injustice, and that promotes an equality agenda with a focus on gender and human rights. In our country, the Universal Social Protection System Law is an invaluable tool that integrates for the first time a network of social policies and strategies that provides basic services to people, is focused on the most vulnerable population groups and is designed to address the main challenges we face.

El Salvador makes every effort to improve the quality of life of the population and to build the conditions that will help us to strengthen family unity, values and create opportunities for new generations and raise awareness about the risks of irregular migration, especially to the United States. I call upon the international community to support us in overcoming the situation generated by the increased flow of unaccompanied migrant children travelling to the United States. The United Nations system, including the General Assembly, must play a greater role in addressing the migration issue and recognize that human mobility is a relevant factor in the Organization's work and include it in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

As we address that phenomenon, which has many causes, we are convinced that we must act with a comprehensive approach that provides protection for the rights of our children, ensures respect for the due process of law and provides support for the reunification of children with their parents. We must work with the communities of origin of the migrant population to create better conditions and increase the investment in education, health, safety and jobs — all from a perspective of joint responsibility among the countries of origin, transit and destination.

Threats to public safety represent another major challenge faced by our country and others in the region and throughout the world. We will not rest until we ensure the necessary conditions for Salvadorans to live safely and in peace. The various sectors of our society are responding to the call of our Government, and we hope that the international community will strengthen its support for the titanic struggle that El Salvador and Central America are waging against violence in all its different forms.

We observe with concern the many conflicts and threats to international peace and security. We deeply regret the loss of lives, particularly of children, as a result of the indiscriminate attacks in Gaza. We welcome the peace plan presented by Egypt, and we urge the parties involved to endeavour to ensure a firm and lasting peace that achieves the coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, within secure borders.

We are concerned about the recent attacks and human rights violations committed by the self-proclaimed Islamic State against the defenceless civilian population. We call on the international community to close ranks in United Nations bodies so as to put an end to those brutal acts. Only the coordinated action of our multilateral system can achieve the results to which we all aspire.

We will always be committed to peace. All citizens of the world must become peacemakers, as Saint John Paul II himself said during one of his visits to El Salvador. El Salvador, as a beneficiary of United Nations support during our historic peace process, cannot fail to strengthen its commitment to support peacekeeping operations around the world. As a country, we are providing support through our prompt contribution to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, and we are standing with the Haitian people in their recovery process, as part of a joint effort of the United Nations system, which cannot be neglected.

I wish to stress that human rights is one of the priority working areas of our foreign policy. In that context, El Salvador has presented its candidacy to the Human Rights Council, which will hold elections at this session of the General Assembly. Our candidacy represents an opportunity for us to continue to fulfil our international commitments and to demonstrate the importance of living under the rule of law in harmony with our environment.

In our efforts in pursuit of peace and inclusive and equitable development, there is no place for contempt for fundamental principles and freedoms. I refer here to the economic, trade and financial blockade against the sister Republic of Cuba, which, in spite of that unilateral action against its people, has overcome the obstacles and adversity imposed on it with exemplary perseverance and determination. Consequently, El Salvador calls for an end to the blockade. We believe that the inclusion of Cuba in the list of States sponsors of international terrorism is unfounded. Cuba must be removed from that mechanism, whose sole purpose is to justify the blockade.

I want to highlight the contribution to multilateralism made by the countries of Central and Latin America and their regional organizations. Let me mention in particular the Central American Integration System, where we have be able to set out a multidimensional regional agenda that guides our regional work through five main pillars: economic integration, social integration and the fight against poverty, comprehensive disaster management and the adaptation to climate change, institutional strengthening and democratic security.

The Central and Latin American region needs international support for the Central American Security Strategy, which will allow our Governments to complement national efforts and have a greater impact on regional security. I reiterate the call for the international community to give its full support to the Strategy. The activities of regional bodies, such as SICA and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, are fundamental and are aimed at strengthening solidarity and cooperation among all peoples of the world.

As I have stated, we are witnessing an unprecedented process of change in the world, which brings with it both opportunities and challenges. If we are to succeed, we must unite and integrate our peoples and Governments in a global community — committed to the values of democracy, peace, equality, progress and development. I conclude by stating that, within our modest possibilities, we are ready to meet that challenge.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Salvador Sánchez Cerén, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sassou Nguesso (*spoke in French*): I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. At the same time, I would like to welcome the wise choice that he has made to view his mandate as an extension of the work of Ambassador John William Ashe, his predecessor, to whom I pay a well-deserved tribute. I also commend the President on having chosen a theme for the sixty-ninth session that invites us to engage in a comprehensive consideration of the post-2015 agenda. I would also like to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and reiterate to him the unwavering support of the Republic of the Congo for the efforts he expends with devotion and selflessness at the head of our Organization.

The world is in turmoil. Humankind lives in fear of tensions and conflicts, which exist virtually everywhere; of terrorism, which has become the bogeyman of States; of old and new epidemics that plague societies, especially the poorest among them; of the persistent disparities among and within States; and of climate change, which threatens our planet. Those are the challenges that arouse a feeling of great apprehension throughout the world.

In turn, they make us put our faith in the United Nations, the only instrument available to the world in its search for solutions to those many problems. In that universal quest, the priority action of States must be directed above all to peace, security and the conservation of nature. For the world needs peace and security, especially wherever senseless conflicts have developed, such as in Syria, Ukraine, Iraq and between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The world needs peace and security in Africa, especially in Libya and throughout the entire Sahel-Saharan region, in South Sudan, Central Africa and the Great Lakes region. Africa needs the increased support of the international community so that Somalia can, once and for all, emerge from the abyss and so that Mali can recover its integrity and unity. It needs such support so that the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has now experienced a degree of calm, will not again be plunged into the violence that afflicted it for so many long years. Finally, it also needs that support so that the positive developments seen in the Central African Republic in recent weeks with the cessation of hostilities agreement, signed in Brazzaville on 23 July, and the transfer of authority, on 15 September, from the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic can be strengthened to allow the Central African people to emerge from the crisis that has lasted too long.

Africa needs the ongoing support of the international community to curb maritime piracy, which increasingly threatens the Gulf of Guinea, and to combat terrorism, which extends from the Sahel to the south of the continent, with the involvement of many local networks. That also applies to Boko Haram, which rages in Nigeria and seeks to spread its activities towards Cameroon, and perhaps soon to other countries if nothing is done to prevent it. The same goes for the rebel movement known as Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army, which is still active in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda.

In Central Africa, as elsewhere on the continent, insecurity is often the result of a number of factors. There are not only war and armed violence but also poverty and endemic diseases, such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, non-communicable diseases and Ebola haemorrhagic fever. We commend the great spirit of solidarity shown by the international community in assisting the African countries affected by the Ebola epidemic to eradicate that terrible scourge. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response by the Secretary-General.

I would like to briefly address the issue of climate change, which, as everyone knows, remains a major threat to our planet. The Republic of the Congo, which fully shares the Common African Position, supports the conclusions of the Elysée Summit for Peace and Security in Africa of 6 and 7 December 2013. The Climate Summit held here in New York on 23 September saw the announcement of firm commitments with a view to the adoption of a universal, important and binding agreement on both mitigation and adaptation at the Paris summit in 2015.

In that regard, I would like to underscore the importance for my country and for Africa of the establishment of technology transfer and innovative financing mechanisms and of ensuring the maximum benefit and real implementation of the Green Climate Fund, as well as the promotion of a substantive programme to counter climate imbalance so as to maximize the opportunities provided by combating climate change.

Illicit logging and the illegal trade in fauna and flora are another serious threat to the environment and to biodiversity. In response to that international environmental crime against biodiversity, during the first half of 2015, my country will host in Brazzaville, under the auspices of the African Union and in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme, an international conference on the illegal exploitation of and the illicit trade in the wild fauna and flora of Africa.

The sixty-ninth session of the Assembly of our Organization takes place on the eve of 2015, the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The review undertaken by stakeholders at all levels has shown that we have not reached those Goals owing to, inter alia, shortcomings in their initial preparation and drafting. Africa is the continent with the largest number of countries that will not have achieved some MDGs by the 2015 deadline. African leaders have adopted a Common Position on the post-2015 development agenda in order to meet those challenges. We call for the joint commitment of all members to ensure that the Common African Position is placed at the centre of our concerns in the negotiations that should lead to the adoption of an inclusive post-2015 development agenda.

Before I conclude, I would like to solemnly reaffirm my country's commitment to the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, the various mechanisms for the protection of human rights and the universal periodic review process, in which we have actively participated. In that spirit, Congo seeks to enrich its legal and institutional framework by strengthening its national system for the promotion and protection of human rights, with the full participation of civil society. In that context, the Republic of the Congo has decided to present, in the upcoming November elections to be held in New York, its candidature for a second term on the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2015-2017.

Sports, as a contributor to peace and development, unites peoples. In that spirit, in September 2015 Brazzaville will host the eleventh All-African Games on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of that African youth festival.

In conclusion, I reaffirm my country's commitment to the ideals of our universal Organization and reiterate our commitment to supporting the efforts of the entire international community for peace, security and development, on which depend the well-being of humankind and the advent of the better world to which we fervently aspire.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the State of Palestine.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Abbas (*spoke in Arabic*): In this year 2014, proclaimed by the General Assembly as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Israel has chosen to make it the year of a new war of genocide perpetrated against the Palestinian people. It is the year in which the Assembly, on behalf of the countries and peoples of the world, conveyed the world's yearning and determination to make a just peace that would achieve freedom and independence for the Palestinian people in their State of Palestine alongside Israel. The occupying Power has chosen to defy the entire world by launching its war on Gaza, in which its jets and tanks brutally destroyed lives and devastated the homes, schools and dreams of thousands of Palestinian children, women and men and, in reality, destroying any remaining hopes for peace.

I addressed the Assembly on similar days in 2012 (see A/67/PV.12), when I cautioned that the colonial occupying Power was preparing a new Nakba against the Palestinian people. I appealed to the Assembly then to prevent a new Nakba and to support the establishment of a free and independent State of Palestine. I returned to the Assembly Hall two months later (see A/67/PV.44) as Palestine was healing its wounds and its people were burying their beloved martyred children, women and men after yet another war waged then against the Gaza Strip. On that day, I stated that there was certainly not a single person in the world who needed the loss of the lives of thousands of Palestinian children in order to confirm that Israel insisted on occupation. The international community also did not need thousands of deadly raids and tons of explosives to remind it that there was an occupation that must end and a people who must be freed.

Again today, we find ourselves full of grief and bitterness, raising the same long-standing conclusions and questions after a new war, the third in five years, waged by that racist occupying State against Gaza, a small, densely populated and precious part of our country. The difference today is that the scale of that genocidal crime is larger. The list of martyrs, especially children, has grown, as hs the number of the wounded, the disabled and the dozens of families who have been completely decimated. The difference today is that approximately half a million people have been displaced from their homes. An unprecedented number of homes, schools, hospitals, public buildings, residential buildings, mosques, factories and cemeteries have been destroyed — the Israelis pursued their vengeance against our young even into the cemeteries. The difference today is that the devastation caused by that recent aggression is unmatched in modern times, as confirmed by a witness, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The latest war against Gaza constituted a series of absolute war crimes, carried out before the eyes and ears of the entire world, moment by moment. It is inconceivable that anyone today could claim not to grasp the magnitude and horror of the crimes. No one can support Israel's right to self-defence without regard for the fate of the thousands of victims of our people. No one can ignore the simple fact, upon which we insist, that the life of a Palestinian is as precious as the life of any other human being. Ignoring the facts on the ground cannot erase such facts. We must also assume that no one can continue to wonder why extremism is rising and why the culture of peace is losing ground and receding, while efforts to achieve it are collapsing. And yet we continue to believe and hope that this time no one will try to help out the occupation by supporting its impunity and its attempts to evade accountability for its crimes.

Here, today, in the name of Palestine, I affirm that we will not forget or forgive, and we will not allow war criminals to escape punishment. Before the Assembly, I affirm that the Palestinian people will hold fast to their legitimate right to defend themselves against the Israeli war machine and to resist Israel's colonial, racist occupation. At the same time, I want to affirm that not for one moment will our grief, trauma and anger make us abandon our humanity, our values and our ethics. We will always maintain our respect for and commitment to international law, international humanitarian law and the international consensus. We will maintain the traditions of our national struggle established by the Palestinian martyrs, to which we have been committed since the start of the Palestinian revolution in early 1965.

In the midst of a torrent of massacres and the turmoil of vast destruction, we saw the peoples of the world gather in huge demonstrations on the streets of many cities to announce their condemnation of Israel's aggression and occupation and their support of freedom for Palestine. We also saw how an overwhelming majority of countries around the world declared themselves for the same noble position and rushed to give our people all kinds of support and assistance. And we saw a qualitative and quantitative expansion in the activities of the international grassroots boycotting campaign against Israel's policies of occupation, apartheid and colonial settlement, especially among academic, cultural, student and youth groups. In the name of Palestine, we pay tribute to all who chose to stand with human values and demanded freedom, justice and peace. All of those manifestations of true solidarity constituted an important message to those who faced genocide in Gaza, helping them to feel that they were not alone.

The recent war confirmed on the ground the essence of what the Israeli Government had been saying behind closed doors in negotiations. It came after long, difficult negotiations held over more than eight months under the auspices of the United States and through the efforts of President Barack Obama and his tenacious Secretary of State, John Kerry. We engaged in that endeavour and with the American Administration's efforts with open minds and in good faith and a positive spirit. We laid out firm positions based on resolutions of international legitimacy. We genuinely respected all our commitments and understandings. Even as we watched the ongoing and escalating Israeli violations, we exercised incredible self-restraint, silencing our cries and tending to our own wounds in order to give the American efforts the best possible chance for success.

However, as usual, the Israeli Government missed no opportunity to undermine the chances for peace. Throughout the months of negotiations, settlement construction, land confiscation, home demolition, killing and arrest campaigns and large-scale forced displacement in the West Bank continued unabated. The unjust blockade of the Gaza Strip was tightened. The occupation's campaign specifically targeted the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, attempting to artificially alter the spirit, identity and character of the Holy City and focusing on Al-Aqsa Mosque while threatening grave consequences. At the same time, armed gangs of racist settlers persisted in their crimes against the Palestinian people and their land, mosques, churches, property and olive trees.

Again as usual, the Israeli Government failed the test of peace. It breached an agreement with the United States Administration regarding the release from the occupation jails of a number of Palestinian prisoners, who we continue to insist should all be released. When confronted with simple questions during the direct negotiations or through the United States mediator, Israel had no hesitation in revealing its true positions. It refuses to end the occupation of the State of Palestine that began in 1967; rather it seeks to continue and entrench it, rejecting the Palestinian State and refusing to reach a just solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees. That is the Government of Israel's official position. At best, the future it proposes for the Palestinian people consists of isolated ghettos for Palestinians on fragmented lands, without borders or sovereignty over its air space, water and natural resources, under the subjugation and control of the racist settlers and the army of occupation; at worst, it is a totally abhorrent form of apartheid. Some of the Israelis say they are for two States. Where is the State of Palestine? This is what they intend for the State of Palestine.

Israel confirmed during the negotiations that it rejects making peace with its victims, the Palestinian people. All of this has been carried out along with an attempt to brand the conflict as a religious one against a background of increasingly rampant racism in Israel's political and media discourse, as well as its entrenchment in the school curriculum and a series of laws and practices in favour of the occupation and its settlers. This culture of racism, incitement and hatred was glaringly apparent some months ago in an appallingly despicable crime committed by fascist settlers, who abducted Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a young boy from Jerusalem, burned him alive and killed him.

This brings me to another fact of history. Over the years, the occupying Power has pursued a policy aimed at deliberately weakening the Palestinian National Authority in order to undermine it and make its role irrelevant. The occupation has targeted our relentless efforts to establish the foundations for the kind of State of Palestine that we want — a sovereign and independent State living in peace and building bridges of mutual cooperation with its neighbours, respecting its commitments, obligations and agreements and strengthening the values of citizenship, equality, nondiscrimination, the rule of law, human rights and pluralism.

We want a State that deepens Palestine's enlightened traditions of tolerance, coexistence and non-exclusion, strengthens the culture of peace, promotes the role of women, establishes an effective administration committed to the standards of good governance, and cares for the needs and interests of its people. The occupation struck, and continues to strike, a blow at this effort because our quest is the antithesis of Israel's settlement policies, and because Israel seeks to destroy Palestine's chance of creating an independent State within the framework of the two-State solution.

When our efforts to end the internal division through national dialogue succeeded a few months ago and we prepared to restore the unity of our land, nation and institutions, we formed a national-consensus Government and began a process that was to lead to presidential and legislative elections. All countries around the world welcomed this achievement, with the exception of Israel, which has constantly sought to fragment our land and our national unity.

Where do we go from here? The idea that one can simply return to the past patterns of actions that failed repeatedly is naive at best and, in any case, wrong. For it ignores the fact that it is no longer acceptable or possible to repeat methods that have proved futile, or to continue with approaches that have repeatedly failed and that require comprehensive review and radical correction.

It is impossible — I repeat, impossible — to return to the cycle of negotiations that failed to deal with the core of the Palestinian question. There is neither credibility nor seriousness in negotiations in which Israel predetermines the results via its settlement activities and the occupation's brutality. Nor is there meaning or value in negotiations in which the agreed objective is not ending the Israeli occupation and achieving the independence of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the entire Palestinian territory occupied in the 1967 war. Moreover, negotiations that are not linked to a firm timetable for the implementation of this goal have no value. The time has come to end this colonial occupation.

Palestine refuses to have the right to freedom of its people, who suffer terrorism at the hands of the racist occupying Power and its settlers and remain hostage to Israel's security conditions. The Palestinian people are actually the ones who need immediate international protection — a protection they are seeking through international organizations. They are in need of the security and peace that they more than any other people are denied. And the children of Palestine are worthy of the world's efforts to ensure that their childhood, dreams and lives will not once again be destroyed. It is time for the chapters of this renewed, ongoing tragedy to be closed.

Those who were uprooted from their warm homes, good land and beautiful country in Al-Nakba 66 years ago, who were pushed into the misery of exile to live as refugees, and are now being forced into new waves of expulsion or onto ships of death on the world's seas, need assurances. They need to be assured that they will not be displaced from their homes again, that their homes will not be destroyed again, and that they will not spend their lives waiting for the outbreak of a new war. Is it not time for this long tragedy to end?

We will not forever accept demands to prove our good intentions by making concessions at the expense of our rights, to remain silent as we are killed and our land is stolen, and to understand the conditions of the other party and the importance of preserving its coalition Government, while its occupation becomes more entrenched. We are exhausted by the additional tests that we must undergo to prove our efficiency, competence and eligibility to earn our natural, simple right to live a normal life; our inherent right to expect a stable and ordinary tomorrow and to dream about more beautiful days; and the right of our youth to plan their future safely with peace and freedom prevailing over our land, like other peoples of the world. The time has come for a genuine and ust peace to prevail in the land of peace. As I have said more than once, we are the only people in the world that remain under occupation.

All the Arab countries and ourselves have constantly warned about the disastrous consequences of the continuing Israeli colonial occupation and the denial of freedom and independence to the Palestinian people. We have repeatedly pointed out that allowing Israel to act as a State above the law without being held accountable or punished for its policies, aggression and defiance of the international community's will and legality has provided fertile ground for, and an environment conducive to, the growth of extremism, hatred and terrorism in our region.

Confronting the terrorism that plagues our region by groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and others, which have no basis whatsoever in the tolerant Islamic religion or humanity, and whose members are committing vile and heinous atrocities, requires much more than military confrontation. The matter is of the utmost urgency and requires much more than condemnations and declarations of positions, which are of course necessary. What is needed, first and foremost, is a comprehensive, credible strategy to dry up the sources of terrorism and eradicate its roots in all political, intellectual, economic and social spheres in our region. It requires the creation of solid foundations for a practical consensus rendering the fight against all forms of terrorism everywhere a collective task to be undertaken by an alliance of peoples, nations and civilizations. It requires, as a priority, ending the Israeli occupation, that in its practices and perpetuation, constitutes an abhorrent form of State terrorism and a breeding ground for incitement, tension and hatred.

At a time when we are still suffering from the horrors of war, we face a formidable challenge to reconstruct what has been destroyed by occupation. This is the third time we are attempting to rebuild after the destruction inflicted on us by the occupation. We greatly appreciate the fact that next month, at the invitation of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Norway, the city of Cairo will host an international conference on relief and reconstruction for the Gaza Strip. Our Government will present comprehensive reports to the conference on the losses the acts of aggression have inflicted on various sectors of society, and it will provide details of plans and programmes to be rapidly implemented in the Gaza Strip, aimed at meeting immediate relief needs and the requirements for reconstruction, in full coordination with and under the supervision of the relevant United Nations agencies and bodies.

The President returned to the Chair.

Just a couple of days ago, the Palestinian faction emphasized its support for Gaza in order to facilitate reconstruction. While we reiterate our appreciation and gratitude to all the countries and organizations that hastened to help the Palestinian people both during and after the war, we are confident that brotherly and friendly countries will not waver in their support for the plans and programmes we will present, and that the conference will have practical results that can meet the expectations and needs of the victims of this act of aggression.

We reaffirm here that the chief prerequisite for the success of all these plans and efforts is an end to the despicable ongoing Israeli blockade that has suffocated the Gaza Strip for years and turned it into the largest prison in the world for nearly 2 million Palestinian citizens. At the same time, we affirm our commitment to and the importance of consolidating the ceasefire through the negotiations being conducted under the auspices of Egypt. However, in order to avoid a repetition of the cycle of war and reconstruction every two or three years, it is imperative that we focus on the fundamental issue and starting point, which is that Gaza's suffering will never be completely over until the occupation is ended and the State of Palestine's independence achieved.

During the past two weeks, Palestine and the Group of Arab States have been working intensively with the various regional groups in the United Nations to prepare for the introduction of a draft resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for adoption by the Security Council and to advance efforts to achieve peace, which we still believe can be accomplished through international legitimacy. This endeavour reaffirms our commitment to achieving a just peace through a negotiated solution and a diplomatic and political effort through United Nations bodies. It is inspired by and based fully on the spirit and provisions of the many resolutions that have been adopted in the General Assembly and the Security Council, laying the foundations for a lasting solution and a just peace. There is nothing new here. All of these are previously adopted resolutions.

This endeavour hopes to correct the failure of previous efforts to achieve peace by affirming the goal of ending the Israeli occupation and achieving a two-State solution for the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, over the entire territory occupied in 1967, alongside the State of Israel, and with a just and agreed-on solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees on the basis of resolution 194 (III), with a specific time frame for implementing those objectives, as stipulated in the Arab Peace Initiative. There must be a time frame. That will be linked to the immediate resumption of negotiations between Palestine and Israel in order to demarcate the borders, reach a detailed and comprehensive agreement on all final status issues and then draft a comprehensive peace treaty between us and them.

We are confident that this endeavour will enjoy the full support of those who are committed to ensuring that our country will not witness new wars and atrocities, who wish to support a campaign to combat terrorism, who believe we must act expeditiously to rectify the historical injustice inflicted by the Nakba on the people of Palestine, and who wish to see peace prevail in the land of monotheistic religions. The adoption of that draft resolution will affirm that this year the Assembly is striving to realize the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, who will continue to be steadfast in their struggle and will rise brave and strong from the rubble of destruction. As our poet Mahmoud Darwish has said, we are infected with the incurable disease of hope, and we love life if we are given a chance at it.

There is an occupation that must end now. There is a people who must be freed immediately. The hour of independence of the State of Palestine has arrived, and I believe you are listening for it.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the State of Palestine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Nebojša Radmanović, Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by a Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Nebojša Radmanović, Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Nebojša Radmanović, Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Radmanović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (*spoke in Bosnian; English text provided by the delegation*): I will start with the issue that I believe is of the utmost importance today, the one causing the greatest concern. Currently, the world is in a state of chaos which is producing understandable fear and concern among its citizens as to a peaceful and secure future. There has not been so much war in the world since the late 1960s. Today, in many parts of our planet, there are low- and medium-intensity conflicts that have the potential to produce wider regional and global conflicts. From Afghanistan to Ukraine, the Middle East, Libya, Central Africa and other regions, we are witnessing armed conflicts with no chance in sight of our being able to stop them and reach a lasting peace.

These conflicts are accompanied by a rarely seen escalation of all forms of violence and brutality, particularly against civilians. Increased numbers of internal civil conflicts are causing States to fall apart, some of them disappearing overnight, others arising with the support of outside enablers. We also see the public emergence of new political maps drawn with new borders, separatist movements getting stronger and international laws being violated with use of force. The situation is the result of the unilateral actions of some great Powers, double standards in international relations, the breaking of the cohesive legal world order and other actions contrary to the norms of international law.

On the other hand, years of economic and financial crisis have led to dramatic social change with alarming socioeconomic consequences. Despite growing global prosperity, the gap between rich and poor countries and nations is getting wider. The middle class is getting smaller while inequality within societies is growing. Systems of social support are declining, with unemployment, especially among young people, taking on alarming proportions. Given the general situation, we must think about future development.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is at present a developing country characterized by an open and fully liberal economy with foreign trade and economic ties directed towards the countries of the region and the European Union. Unfortunately, as a developing country, we are facing the problem of a high unemployment rate — over 25 per cent — a large trade deficit, lack of capital and major investment and insufficient and weak industrial production.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's economic and social situation is similar to that of the region of the Western Balkans in general. It is extremely difficult. The economic reconstruction and recovery of the country after the tragic conflict of 1991-1995 have slowed since the global economic crisis engulfed the entire world. However, while total economic growth in 2013 was 1 per cent, industrial production increased to 6.7 per cent. The biggest economic problem is the decline in foreign investment, which in 2013 was 34 per cent less than in 2012. Due to the general economic downturn in the country and countries of the region, as well as the damage caused by natural disasters and their negative effects on economic and production activities, the decline in indirect tax revenues significantly endangered the fiscal stability of the country.

Regardless of current negative economic trends due to the economic crisis, we believe that by using our natural resources appropriately we can achieve an economic growth and development that would lead to long-term progress and political stabilization of the country. In order to do that, it is clear that we and the region need the support of the developed world, especially the developed countries of the European Union, the United States and Japan as well as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

We cannot achieve sustainable development that involves investment in the real sector of the economy, building and developing transportation infrastructure, poverty reduction, and the effective and rational use of resources entirely by ourselves. We are too small a country and region to achieve those objectives alone, nor do we have enough capital to build industrial facilities that adhere to green economy principles or protect natural resources and put us on a sustainable development track.

When it comes to the economic determinants of sustainable development, I am convinced that most small countries share the same perspective and position. We cannot resolve issues of progress alone or prevent the emergence of the vicious cycle of poverty that threatens to undermine our societies. Therefore, in future we will need to continue to adhere to the principles of economic solidarity and mutual economic cooperation and support, and find a common framework of values and actions.

In addition, given the multipolarity of the economic world, I hope that we will find more partners from developed countries on our path towards development and recovery. The world of the future should not be determined by the false choice between haves and have-nots. Apart from the issue of uncertainty for the future, every crisis entails the erroneous belief that rich countries fare better than poor ones. Indeed, one forgets that, due to global interdependence and responsibility, no one can survive alone; either we all do or nobody does.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains committed to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, despite the difficulty of their implementation, given the challenging conditions following the war and the economic crisis. Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to regional cooperation with all interested countries, based on the principles of mutual respect and common interests. Bosnia and Herzegovina is surrounded by neighbours who are also in various stages of transition and democratic reform, and we share the same problems arising from the complex processes that must be engaged on our way towards membership in the European Union.

We attach special importance to regional cooperation. Bosnia and Herzegovina has good-neighbourly relations marked by long historical ties and regional interdependence with Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro and other countries of the former Yugoslavia and the Balkans.

All of us gathered here today representing our countries and peoples need, in the near and distant future, to find concrete and clear solutions to the problems and challenges caused by the broadest range of sustainable development issues, as defined by a number of the United Nations conferences over the past 20 years. The sustainable development of countries, regions and groups of countries, continents and the entire world is a key element and basic starting point for further strategic steps and activities for modern humankind to resolve. The state of the world economy, environment and the contemporary society as a whole is full of problems and challenges that require our full commitment and dedication to continued growth and the expanded possibility of achieving sustainable development in the world, which unfortunately slowed down and stopped with the emergence of the global economic and financial crisis starting in 2008.

I should like to say a few words about possible problems related to sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region of South-East Europe as an important European region poised to build strong political and economic ties with the European Union and other countries worldwide.

I am afraid that we in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have the same starting position as other countries of the world in terms of inclusion in the sustainable development process of the United Nations. In 1992, when the first conference was held in Rio de Janeiro, we were at the beginning of a horrendous chapter of our history and a tragic conflict whose negative political and economic effects have continued to cause suffering in society. However, with the support of the United Nations and the European Union, today we are on the road to recovery, with the hope of achieving the ultimate goal of political success, namely, full legal integration into the European Union and the economic achievement of developed country status.

This year the world is celebrating the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. Incredibly, the current world economic and political situation resembles the situation of 100 years ago. A crisis of economic depression, social disintegration, an ineffective international system and the rise of armed conflicts and wars have led to a weakening of the optimistic driving force and a lack of global vision and joint action. The common goal that is necessary for a stable international order is fading on the horizon of spreading conflicts. It requires us to set clear priorities and seek new lighthouse beacons.

This year in Bosnia and Herzegovina we marked the Sarajevo assassination that is commonly taken as the direct cause of the start of the First World War, which resulted in the deaths of more than 15 million people. At several events dedicated to the anniversary, together we have asked ourselves: Have we learned the lessons from the past of 100 years ago? When I see the local wars being fought on all sides of the world today, I am afraid that we have not learned those lessons; on the contrary and in the meantime, we have repeated the same old mistakes and made new ones.

The world needs peace more than ever. It is only in peace that one can develop and prosper. The maintenance of international peace and security is imperative to the development of every country and the entire world. It is the responsibility of the Member States to find acceptable frameworks and tools to improve the security situation in the world in the interest of development and progress.

In conclusion, three days ago I spoke in my capacity as a Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the Climate Summit. Yesterday I met with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the same capacity. Today, the Secretariat has allowed itself to interpret the Charter of the United Nations wrongfully, unfortunately. That is unacceptable. The future of the Organization of the United Nations is based on consensual agreement by all Member States and not the decisions of the bureaucracy.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nebojša Radmanović, Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Samoa congratulates the President on his election and lends its full support to the agenda that will guide our work during his tenure. In the same spirit, I applaud our Secretary-General and Samoan Prince Tupua Ban Ki-moon for his firm commitment and strong leadership in steering our Organization during this particularly turbulent and difficult period for the world.

As members of the global family, our futures and interests are inextricably linked. Crises with a global reach threaten to engulf the world and affect all nations irrespective of whether they caused or contributed to the crisis.

Climate change is one such crisis. It is the world's most urgent problem and the greatest moral challenge of our time. Known crises of global dimensions pale in comparison to what climate change poses to our world as a whole and to the future security of some of our low-lying islands as sovereign States. Climate change is indifferent to the suffering of countries touched by its destructive reach. The victims can be rich or poor, large or small, resilient or vulnerable, but they hardly matter. It impacts all. For some there are already existential implications looming. Others may consider the effect on them to be minimal. Such complacency would be a grave mistake and tantamount to gross negligence. If climate change is not addressed comprehensively, the consequences for our planet will be dire indeed and will affect all countries.

No country should therefore stay detached and unconcerned before the plight of the majority. All countries must work together. Apportioning blame for the present state of our environment is in itself yet another human failing. It serves no useful purpose. Being judgemental will not restore our environment. Those who exploit the traditional divide between developed and developing countries and ideological and political differences do so conveniently, to mask their own unwillingness to be part of the solution to an impending global catastrophe.

There is too much at stake for the world to just sit idly by. Strong visionary leadership that rises beyond the dictates of vested national interests and political tenures and views the world as a single constituency where everyone must work together within the limits of their capacity and capability to be part of the total solution is at a premium. Governments must yield — not to vested interests and expediency of time, but because it is the ethical and just thing to do. Our timelines are slipping by fast and soon we will be playing catch-up. Yet each day lost to indecisiveness and wrangling on petty points only intensifies the challenges we face. The Lima and Paris climate conferences will provide the best openings for the world to redeem itself. States

Members of the United Nations should step forward with a sense of urgency and commitment to addressing climate change today, not tomorrow. It should not just be science and real life experiences that force us to act, but also our consciences.

Against this backdrop, the Climate Summit on Tuesday was timely. Its message was clear and simple. Our actions to address climate change are grossly inadequate. We are focusing more on symptoms than on the root causes, and the solemn truth is that things will only get worse if we do not act collectively now. However, a ray of hope, best captured in the following fundamental truths, is couched delicately in this ominous prediction.

First, climate change is a societal problem requiring decisive political leadership and a whole-of-society approach. Every individual effort and every national action counts because in unity we succeed, but in division there is little we can do. Secondly, we need a global solution if we are to succeed. The United Nations is our last best hope. It is indispensable to a sustainable solution that we provide the necessary commitment to turning the tide against climate change. Thirdly, climate change is solvable, and the solution is firmly in our hands.

Only through enlightened leadership and the concerted efforts of all countries, with the major greenhouse gas emitters at the forefront, do we stand a chance of lessening the destructive impact of climate change and of reaching a credible post-Kyoto climate agreement next year. Samoa calls upon those States Members of our Organization that are in a position of world leadership to lead the charge and to undertake the tasks that need to be implemented quickly and decisively so that the Paris conference can deliver on an ambitious climate change agreement that is effective, binding, capable of swift implementation, and universally owned and respected by the 193 States Members of the United Nations.

The Ebola outbreak is a deadly pandemic causing chaos and untold suffering in parts of West Africa. Its reach is global and if it is not treated it may prove unstoppable. It has no respect for national borders or Government sovereignty, and its victims are selected indiscriminately. Born and unborn babies are robbed of their youth, girls and boys of their adulthood, and women and men of their productive lives, their dignity and worth, while countries are dispossessed and deprived of their valuable human assets.

Can we win the war on Ebola? Samoa believes that we can and we should. That was why we were honoured to be among the 134 co-sponsors of Security Council resolution 2177 (2014) on peace and security in Africa, with reference to Ebola, last Thursday. The Security Council resolution was adopted with the highest-ever number of sponsors and was swiftly followed the next day by General Assembly resolution 69/1, which unanimously approved a proposal to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. Samoa welcomes the rapid, decisive and coordinated response of United Nations Member States and agencies, and in particular the proactive role the Secretary-General played in mobilizing both the political will and the material resources necessary to respond to this grave crisis.

The global response to the Ebola outbreak is a powerful illustration of what is possible when States collaborate and coordinate to assist each other in achieving common and critical goals. Such unified responses have tangible results and save lives. Samoa encourages all Member States to take this spirit of cooperation forward, and to harness and follow this example when dealing with other critical global issues.

As we meet here at the United Nations, the rise in extremism has a taken a turn for the worst. Radical militants are committing unspeakably brutal and barbaric atrocities across the Middle East, and threatening to spread their evil brand further afield. As a small island nation in the Pacific Ocean, these threats can seem extremely far removed from my country of Samoa. However, in the globalized age in which we live, all countries are threatened by challenges to international peace and security. Developments in one State invariably have effects in others, and this is true of my country, far away as we are.

Global interconnectedness has brought innumerable benefits to all countries, but it also increasingly brings risks from distant corners of the Earth. As such, it is imperative that the United Nations and its Member States commit to tackling threats to international peace and security, especially through the Security Council. Specifically, States Members of the United Nations must increase their collaboration and cooperation to find solutions to challenges to peace and security, and work diligently to implement them.

The United Nations was founded upon the values of collective security and, for small nations, remains a critical forum in which to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, stability and prosperity. This is particularly important for small island developing States (SIDS), which risk a reversal of the development gains they have made due to crises far from home. To cement and build upon development goals already achieved, international peace and security must be maintained, and it is the responsibility of all Member States, particularly those on the Security Council, to work in close cooperation to ensure that this happens.

Samoa belongs to the group of small island developing States, a United Nations-recognized group with special needs and inherent vulnerabilities, not by choice, but by dint of factors completely outside its control. Part of the dilemma we continually face is the misconception that SIDS challenges are minuscule in comparison to the needs of other special groups and regions, and that their one and only concern is climate change. Nothing could be further from the truth.

My country was honoured to host, on behalf of the Pacific region, the once-in-a decade International Conference on Small Island Developing States three weeks ago. Our primary goal in hosting the Third SIDS Conference was to have the spotlight of international attention fall on SIDS, their challenges and realities. Now that the spotlight has faded, we hope that the increased understanding and appreciation of SIDS issues and challenges gained at the Conference will not be forgotten over time or sidelined by other competing priority issues.

The international community has a very full agenda. We as nations are being pulled in many directions. This general debate and the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly will show just how packed the agenda is. The follow-up to the SIDS Conference will be part of that agenda. It is our hope that, despite all the political, economic and other demands on the countries of the world, the realities of SIDS, so clearly spelled out in Apia and in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action — the SAMOA Pathway — are able to retain the attention of the wider international community. We took seriously the commitments made to SIDS at the Conference and we will remain deeply mindful of how those commitments are turned into actions.

The Conference had as its theme "The sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships". We are ready to build on our existing partnerships. We may be small, but we are also able to demonstrate the impact of our people and our countries in successful, twenty-first century partnerships. We may be small and sometimes invisible to many. However, we know that united the SIDS are a strong and positive group. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is showing its determination in a growing range of areas and forums. Samoa, like other Pacific islands, is proud of its place within AOSIS.

The SAMOA Pathway asks the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive review of how the United Nations system supports SIDS. This is an opportunity to ensure that the United Nations is fit for the purpose when it comes to supporting SIDS. There is ample scope for improvement, and we look forward to engaging fully in the process. The time for business as usual has long passed. Let us work for an approach to SIDS that shows the United Nations at its best.

The SAMOA Pathway is a well-crafted intergovernmental agreement that has the seal and stamp of approval of the United Nations membership. Going forward, it falls on SIDS themselves to be prepared to lead and own the SAMOA Pathway if it is to be sustainable. Together with the specific entities within the Secretariat charged with advocating and championing SIDS causes, they should be more proactive and assertive. Jointly, they must reposition themselves to engage better in a more effective and visible partnership.

Moreover, what we need to achieve is a human face of SIDS to every issue that comes before the United Nations, be it security, human rights, climate change, development, gender or indigenous issues. That way, SIDS issues will be at the forefront of the United Nations agenda. They will remain topical and relevant and be taken up, debated and acted upon daily, weekly or monthly — and not conveniently set aside to be discussed only when we have another SIDS conference 10 years from now.

Samoa continues to support United Nations peacekeeping efforts worldwide. Small though we are, Samoan police continue to serve side by side with officers from other countries in places that require the intervention of the United Nations. Within the Pacific region, our solidarity with our neighbours in meeting challenges means a guaranteed Samoan police presence in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands and under the umbrella of the Pacific Islands Forum.

A durable peace settlement in the Middle East continues to elude us, but that is not grounds to be pessimistic. We should support every effort to create conditions conducive to the successful establishment of an independent Palestinian State alongside a secure and safe State of Israel.

Finally, those bent on creating fear and panic throughout the world will stop at nothing to achieve their aims. We must not be held hostage to their devious designs. Individually and collectively, we must step up our efforts to combat the threat of international terrorism in its many manifestations. No country can succeed on its own. Only by working collaboratively can we be successful.

As we approach the new post-2015 development agenda, the culmination of many years of international negotiations and agreements on sustainable development, we must ensure that while a one-framework approach is important, it does not equate to a one-size-fits-all formula for purposes of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Indeed, the applicability of the Millennium Development Goals and their indicators to small island countries proved difficult, and much tailoring was necessary before those global targets were seen as relevant enough for us to meaningfully participate. It is important therefore in the defining and refining of the sustainable development goals and post-2015 development agenda that we account for groups like SIDS and ensure that the indicators developed are also applicable to their situations. Building on the existing processes and experiences in the SIDS countries and their respective regions and subregions is critical in that regard.

Fortunately, we are on the back of a successful SIDS Conference whose theme focused on effective means of implementation through partnerships. We must ensure therefore that the means to implement the SAMOA Pathway is solidly incorporated into the post-2015 development framework. Those arrangements are well entrenched in the High-level Political Forum and the review arrangements of the Economic and Social Council. It is important that the intergovernmental architectures of our respective SIDS regions be included in the process, which means working together. We cannot afford a situation where we have intergovernmental organizations developing separate policies and implementation arrangements and partnerships for the same things. We must work together.

Finally, we must break down what has been a traditional them-and-us perception on both sides of the divide between Member States and the Secretariat established to serve our collective needs. It has not served either side well; we are in fact on the same side. I would therefore encourage any coordination mechanisms established to ensure representation of both in order to promote transparency and a balance of perspectives and interests. The Inter-Agency Consultative Group for SIDS is perhaps an arrangement that could benefit from Member State representation as well, where open discussions can take place around effective implementation of the SAMOA Pathway and the post-2015 development agenda.

Some of our development partners, traditional and new, have reached out to help us. What they have in common is trust and respect for our views and needs. Bilaterally, regionally and internationally, they are partnering with SIDS to overcome some of the constraints imposed by limited land and narrow natural resource bases, isolation and downward agricultural production, sustained food security for our expanding populations, and the need to provide a meaningful existence for our people and communities in the rural areas.

The United Nations was established to prevent wars, bring peace and security, and protect human rights through multilateralism and intergovernmental cooperation. The architecture of the Organization we have today is very complex, and, inevitably, there are imperfections. However, the fact that we have consistently met without failure at the General Assembly each year is irrefutable proof that our Organization works at many and different levels. It is hard to imagine where the world would be without the United Nations. It is why Samoa's support for our Organization is unwavering.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.*

Address by Mr. Mohammed Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Mohammed Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Masum (*spoke in Arabic*): I salute the General Assembly on behalf of Iraq and congratulate Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We wish him and the Secretary-General every success during the session. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the vital role he has played in the past years in supporting and enhancing the progress of my country, something for which we in Iraq are grateful and proud.

Fourteen years ago, heads of State and Government committed themselves to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, focusing on issues that are now still vital, foremost among which are social and economic development, the protection of international peace and security, the end of the arms race, disarmament, elimination of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) — whose very name incites fear in everyone — fighting terrorism and widespread organized crime, guaranteeing human rights and the effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts, and promoting justice and international law. In that context, we would like to remind the General Assembly of our very bitter memory and experience as victims of WMDs in Halabja, the peaceful Kurdish city that was attacked by chemical weapons in 1988 at the hands of the dictatorial regime then in power.

Next year, we will celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations as an Organization that represents international legitimacy. That occasion will allow us to express the value of the Organization and its achievements. It will also be an occasion to take up more initiatives to settle disputes by peaceful means and promote human rights and larger freedoms and equality for all. We will also be celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, which was a turning point in seeking to promote the rights of women and curb all forms of violence to which they are exposed. We need to promote efforts to protect our planet from pollution and create a sound, clean environment to fight the problems of poverty, illness and illiteracy.

The success of political parties in Iraq in establishing, a few weeks ago, a Government of national unity that represents Iraqis every stripe was extremely important. It is a Government that everyone feels represents them. Its programme responds to their aspirations and hopes to move forward with their provinces into another era of stability, internal progress and rebuilding. It is a Government that seeks to build friendly relationships in the region based on understandings that guarantee peaceful coexistence among States of the region on the basis of mutual interests and good-neighbourliness.

The establishment of the Government was a firm response to a real danger that was stalking us all, namely, the danger posed by Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). That infamous and evil group has launched international terrorist actions to attack defenceless civilians. It has ushered in a new era and brought terror to a new level. ISIL has been able to occupy areas in more than one city in Iraq and Syria and established a State based on hatred and rejection of the Other. In the past few months, we have seen how that heinous terrorist organization committed crimes against humanity, such as killing and displacing people, committing genocide and ethnic cleansing and inflicting great suffering on all components of the Iraqi people with its horrific crimes and massacres.

It has kidnapped women and sold them as enslaved captives. It has destroyed religious shrines and houses of worship, as well as cultural and historic monuments. It has oppressed components of the Iraqi people on the basis of their ethnic identities, like Turkmens and Kurds, and targeted religious and confessional minorities, including Yazidis, Christians and the Shabak. We would like to thank the free people of the world who have expressed their dismay, rejected those crimes and stood in solidarity with the victims by providing assistance.

That terrorist organization disposes of huge financial and military assets. By declaring the so-called Islamic Caliphate, ISIL has become a magnet for militants and extremists in the Middle East and the world, who have declared allegiance to that obscurantist regime and started working under its command. Among the most dangerous phenomena of that transformation is the emergence of a new generation of terrorists who have American, European or other citizenship.

The Iraqi Armed Forces, the Peshmerga and the Popular Defence volunteers have been able to stop the advance of ISIL and prevent its occupation of new areas. We also succeeded in breaking the siege and liberating cities that had been occupied by the terrorists of that dangerous organization. The huge humanitarian and military support that we received from United Nations organizations, the United States, the States of the European Union and other friendly States has played a vital role in assisting us in confronting that obscurantist terrorist group. We shall neever forget the support we received against that group, which confirmed to our people that we are not alone in our fight against terrorism.

I would like here to express the gratitude of all the people of Iraq and our Government's appreciation to all those who stood by us in our war against those enemies of humankind. We would like to thank those whose efforts made the Paris and Jeddah conferences a success. And we would like to thank those who made every effort to adopt a Security Council resolution that guarantees solidarity and partnership in facing terrorism and the challenges it poses to everyone.

As we meet in the Assembly today, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees, who were forced to leave their homes without taking with them even the most basic possessions, look to us. Millions of defenceless civilians who have been forced to live under the oppression and tyranny of the terrorists of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) also look to us. Their protection and needs are our common responsibility. We call on the international community to stand by our side in this war against terrorism and to support our efforts and those of international organizations and friendly countries in alleviating the suffering of refugees, who hope someday to return to their homes and to get rid of ISIS.

ISIS is a transnational and intercontinental organization. We reiterate here that eliminating it can be achieved only by forming a unified global front to take measures to fight the takfiri approach and dry up its connected financial, ideological, organizational and military resources. We in Iraq are determined to cleanse our land of ISIS. We would like to emphasize that eliminating terrorism in Iraq will be an important step in protecting our region and in ridding the world of that danger.

Here we welcome Security Council resolution 2170 (2014), adopted in August, which calls on Member States to prevent the support, financing and arming of ISIS terrorists, the Nusra Front and other entities related to Al-Qaida to prevent such flows into Iraq. We should also like to commend the Human Rights Council for its resolution condemning ISIS and establishing a fact-finding commission to investigate crimes against humanity committed by that group against all Iraqis.

In the context of the international response to terrorism, and while we stress the importance of consolidating the value and culture of peace and coexistence in countries with multi-ethnic and multi-confessional societies, we in Iraq call for institutionalizing such a responsible position at the United Nations. Such institutions must be tasked with developing and operationalizing international solidarity, using all the means available to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and to rid the world of its evils. We also believe that the time has come to work collectively within individual countries and with all countries in the region so that we can defuse tension about our security and achieve national understanding that contributes to limiting the space available to terrorism, which typically lives off conflict and strife. The meetings held in Jeddah, Paris and New York and the statements, declarations and resolutions adopted have sent important messages to the Iraqi people. We hope that all of them will be translated into practical measures.

In the Middle East, it hurts us to see the recent suffering of the fraternal Palestinian people in Gaza and other Palestinian territories. We therefore renew our call on the international community to honour its commitment to the Palestinian people and exert concerted efforts to restore peace and return to the negotiations table in order to end the conflict and achieve lasting peace and security. For our brothers in Yemen and Libya, we hope for stability and the end of the threats of terrorism and extremism. We also wish success and progress on the democratic path chosen by the Libyan and Yemeni peoples. We hope that the fraternal Syrian people will be able to overcome the country's dilemma. We hope that Syrians will unite in their efforts to arrive at a political solution that ends the bloodshed and preserves life. We also hope that such a solution will help neighbourly Syria to achieve democracy, peace and security in our region. Continued tension in those hotbeds in our region will only fuel extremism and extremist obscurantist ideology. That makes us all want to work together to expedite a search for solutions to the problems that contributes to creating a humanitarian environment based on civilization, culture and freedom.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

With regard to Ukraine, we express our concern about the dangerous escalation of the situation. We believe that the international community cannot allow any exacerbation of the conflict, with the ensuing dire consequences for civilians, whether they have been displaced or are forced to live in conflict zones.

Iraq notes the results achieved by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The Group's recommendations in its report (A/67/941, annex) constitute an important step and deserve our appreciation. We truly value the efforts they have made to arrive at its conclusions. However, the issue of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations does not occupy the space it deserves in the report. It should have been incumbent upon the Group to address that challenge as an objective on its own and to look into its core, manifestations, causes, repercussions and the ways to address them.

Throughout this era, humankind has been able to work to promote human partnership and enhance prospects for peace, freedom, human rights, prosperity and security. I stand before the Assembly today as a representative of a country that was enervated by terror for over a decade. On behalf of the millions of families of martyrs, orphans and the bereaved, I address the Assembly to stress that we have no other option but to defeat ISIS everywhere. With will, determination and vision, we look forward to a future in which we can liberate our societies from the risks that continue to threaten us.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohammed Fuad Masum, President of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communication and Media and Minister for Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Bettel (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly for the first time, and I must say that I do so with great emotion. Commitment, solidarity and responsibility are the three key words that have guided and will continue to guide my country's action at the United Nations. As a founding Member of the United Nations, Luxembourg has based its foreign policy on active participation in multilateral cooperation. That multilateralism is founded on respect for international law and cooperation among sovereign and equal States in order to work collectively for peace, development and respect for human rights.

For us, the United Nations is at the heart of multilateralism. We are committed to making the United Nations as effective as possible so that we can solve together, in solidarity, issues that far exceed our capacities as States. We have the responsibility to overcome such issues for the sake of future generations. Commitment, solidarity and responsibility also define the approach that should guide our response to the challenges facing us on the eve of 2015.

With the President's choice of the theme for this sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, he calls upon us to develop and deliver on a transformative post-2015 development agenda and to ensure its effective implementation. That post-2015 development agenda must be bold and ambitious if we are to live up to our collective responsibility to eradicate poverty and to promote sustainable development. It must build on the Millennium Development Goals and must go further. The agenda must be holistic, action-oriented and universally applicable. It must benefit both developing and developed countries. It must be based on human rights. It must give the social sectors, health care and education all the importance that they deserve. The issues of governance, justice, peace and security, as well as the protection of the environment, sustainable consumption and production patterns and sustained economic growth, must be part of that agenda.

Luxembourg supports and welcomes the important work accomplished by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Its report (A/67/941, annex) and the set of goals that it proposes are a useful basis for the negotiations that will culminate in a year's time in the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda and a new model for sustainable development that reconciles "the ambitions of humanity and the needs of the planet", as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said.

Aware of its international responsibilities, my country has a long-standing commitment to development, motivated by a desire for solidarity with the poorest people. Since 2000, Luxembourg has been one of the five industrialized countries to allocate at least 0.7 per cent of its gross national income to development cooperation. In 2009, our development assistance reached the level of 1 per cent of gross national income. The Government is committed to maintaining that high level despite a difficult budgetary position, which is no easier in our country than in others. Such aid can offer upcoming generations prospects and opportunities for the future and, we should realize, can therefore, I hope, prevent certain conflicts.

The fight against climate change is an integral part of any global partnership for development. In that context, allow me to welcome the holding of the climate summit on Tuesday. That summit clearly achieved the dual objective set by the Secretary-General: to demonstrate the essential political will to reach a global agreement in 2015 and to act as a catalyst for concrete action on the ground so as to reduce emissions and to increase resilience. In the second half of 2015, my country will assume the presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU). We will spare no effort to ensure that we reach an international climate agreement at the 2015 Paris climate summit that is applicable to all countries, with the objective of keeping global warming below 2°C.

With its European Union partners, Luxembourg has made binding commitments to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and to mitigate the effects of climate change. Before the upcoming meetings, in accordance with the timetable that we agreed in Warsaw, the European Union will present additional contributions to rise to the challenge.

We are also making commitments at the national level. I would mention, for example, our support for the statement on carbon pricing, presented at the Climate Summit, as well as the new contribution of €5 million to the Green Climate Fund, which we announced at the summit, without any reduction in our official development assistance.

There will be no development without security and no security without development. And both development and security also depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law. We all know Kofi Annan's saying. Luxembourg has made it the guiding principle of its action in the Security Council since 1 January 2013 by devoting its undivided attention to the root causes of conflict, their humanitarian and economic impact and human rights, in particular the rights of children affected by conflict.

To illustrate that approach, I will talk about the conflict in Syria. That conflict, which has been raging for three and a half years, now shocks the human conscience. There are more than 191,000 people dead. There are 10.8 million Syrians in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, over half of whom are children. More than 4.5 million Syrians are trapped by the fighting in areas that are difficult for humanitarian actors to access. More than 3 million Syrians have been forced to leave their country, over 1 million of whom are refugees in Lebanon. Those figures rarely make the headlines now. However, behind those figures, there is so much suffering and so many shattered lives.

That cannot continue. We must put an end to the indiscriminate attacks against civilians, schools and hospitals, the bombardment with barrel bombs, the denial of humanitarian assistance and the use of famine as a weapon of war. At the initiative of Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg, the Security Council unanimously adopted two resolutions on access for humanitarian aid to Syria (Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)). I strongly hope that those resolutions will have a real and decisive impact on the ground.

However, humanitarian action cannot be a substitute for political action. The lasting settlement of the Syrian conflict requires a political solution — a political transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, in accordance with the Geneva communiqué of June 2012 (S/2012/522, annex).

Today, we cannot procrastinate in the face of the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by terrorist groups, in particular the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. That group is neither a State nor Islamic. It defiles Islam and seeks only to spread its terror regime and to destabilize Syria, Iraq and the entire region.

My country fully supports the measures adopted against individuals and entities associated with Al-Qaida to cut off their channels of financing, to prevent radicalization and to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. We do so pursuant to Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), which we adopted the day before yesterday at the Security Council summit presided over by the United States President, Barack Obama, in which I had the honour to particiapte.

Beyond the fight against terrorism, we must tackle the root causes of the grave crisis in Iraq. In that context, we welcome the formation of the new Iraqi Government of national unity, under the leadership of Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi. We encourage him to follow an inclusive approach that respects all ethnic and religious segments of Iraqi society and that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all. The Iraqi people must regain trust in their country's democratic institutions.

For the third time in six years, this summer we witnessed bloody fighting in the Gaza Strip. The cycle of violence must stop. The actions that fuel hatred and discord must cease. Israelis and Palestinians must finally be able to live in peace, security and dignity. The two-State solution, the peaceful coexistence of two democratic States — Israel and Palestine — within secure and recognized borders, remains the only possible way forward in that regard. A political solution must be sought as soon as possible to avoid extremists from all sides from prevailing and to avoid measures being taken that would make the two-State solution impossible. With its partners in the European Union, Luxembourg is ready to contribute to a global and sustainable solution.

The time allotted to me does not suffice to do justice to the manifold crises that we face today. I would, however, like to say that they all bring one duty to light, namely, to protect civilians. That duty is at the heart of the mandates entrusted to the stabilization and peacekeeping missions of the United Nations and regional organizations like the African Union in Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and now in the Central African Republic. On the African continent, our credibility and our responsibility to protect are at stake. Twenty years after the Rwandan genocide, indifference is no longer an option.

I should now like to say a word about my own continent, Europe. The crisis in Ukraine has step-by-step turned into a conflict — one that, unfortunately, shows that the times when we thought peace on the European continent had become self-evident are over. The conflict has already cost the lives of more than 3,000 people. It must end and it must end now. Dialogue and diplomacy are of the essence.

From Syria to the Central African Republic, from Iraq to South Sudan, the list of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed on a daily basis becomes longer each day. The perpetrators of those crimes, of grave violations and abuses of human rights, of violations of international law and international humanitarian law must be held accountable before justice for their acts. The fight against impunity must cease to be an abstract objective and become a tangible reality. The International Criminal Court has an important role to play in that regard.

With regard to grave violations of international law and war crimes, I would like to draw attention to the violations and atrocities committed against children. Children are often the first victims of armed conflicts: they are killed and maimed, they are abducted and recruited, and they are sexually abused. They are deprived of their right to education and health care. They are cruelly denied access to humanitarian assistance.

As Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Luxembourg is working in a determined way to strengthen and to implement fully the children and armed conflict agenda. We will continue to do so beyond our tenure on the Security Council. Children embody the hope and future of every society. All together, we must do everything we can to safeguard that hope and future from the horrors of war. We cannot acquiesce to sacrificing future generations.

The fight against sexual violence calls for the same commitment. Sexual violence in conflict spares no one. It affects adults and children, women and men. We must resolutely tackle this scourge.

The prevention of conflict is a core purpose of the Organization. Spotting early-warning signs of a conflict is of crucial importance if we want to take the most effective measures at the right time, and if we want to prevent a situation from escalating into open conflict. We know that most conflicts are preceded by a significant deterioration in the human rights situation. It is on that basis that the Secretary-General launched the Rights Up Front initiative — rights before anything else. Its aim is to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to act as a smoke detector before it is too late to prevent the fire from spreading or, to continue that metaphor, to alert the fire brigade before the fire gets out of control. Luxembourg welcomes that initiative. It is a forceful reminder of our collective obligation to protect and promote human rights. It rightly places the protection of human rights at the centre of the efforts undertaken by the United Nations to prevent conflicts.

Tackling the root causes of conflict, poverty, discrimination, the absence of the rule of law, to name just those few, is part of the same preventive approach.

However, I also have to recall that in certain countries, being different is not always accepted. The rights of minorities must be respected. It is unacceptable that to this day, a religion or a sexual orientation, for example, prevents a person from living freely in certain societies. Diversity is the richness of our society, it is not a crime.

As I address the Assembly, there are numerous threats to peace and security we must face that require a holistic response. I have already addressed terrorism and our common struggle to eradicate that scourge. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction constitutes another clear threat. The joint plan of action agreed in Geneva on 24 November 2013 was an important milestone towards solving the Iranian nuclear issue. I would like to reiterate Luxembourg's full support for the efforts of the EU 3+3 to arrive at a comprehensive settlement that restores trust in the exclusively peaceful purpose of the Iranian nuclear programme. I urge Iran to engage fully and in good faith in order to allow those discussions to lead to the expected results as soon as possible.

In Africa as well as in Latin America, small arms are the real weapons of mass destruction. The devastating consequences of the unregulated arms trade are well documented. I am therefore particularly pleased that the Arms Trade Treaty, which was adopted last year by a very broad majority of the Assembly, will enter into force on 25 December. Luxembourg was honoured to be among the first States to sign and ratify it. It is our fervent hope that we will be able to achieve our shared goal of making it a universal treaty.

Also along the lines of threats to international peace and security, allow me to touch upon the serious crisis caused by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. This is not a simple humanitarian emergency, far from it. It is a multidimensional crisis that threatens the institutions, societies and economies of the three countries affected by the outbreak — and the region as a whole. It calls for mobilization at every level: national, regional and global. The Secretary-General fully appreciates the magnitude of the challenge, and we wholeheartedly support the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. There is no time to lose. Beyond the contributions we have already made to the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, Doctors Without Borders and the Red Cross, we stand ready to do more, in close consultation with the countries of West Africa, many of which are Luxembourg's partners, as well as with the United Nations and civil society organizations on the ground.

In conclusion, allow me to return to the three keywords that guide our efforts: commitment, solidarity, responsibility. It was our eagerness to work for strong and effective multilateralism and our resolve to serve the United Nations that motivated Luxembourg to aspire to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council, for the first time in its history, for the 2013-2014 term. During the past 20 months, Luxembourg has worked hard every day to show that it is up to that responsibility. It has worked hard to show that it is worthy of the honour bestowed upon it by the General Assembly when it was elected to the Security Council. We carry out our mandate in the name of all States Members of the United Nations, and we are quite aware of that. Today, I would like to take this opportunity to heartily thank the Assembly, in my personal capacity and in the name of the Government of Luxembourg, for the trust placed in us. The Aseembly can rest assured that we will continue to serve the United Nations to uphold our common values, the values of humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and the Media and Minister of Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister, Minister of State, Minister for Communications and the Media and Minister of Worship of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, was escorted from the rostrum.*

Address by Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

> *Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted to the rostrum.*

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Sharif (Pakistan): I congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I assure him that his priorities — the revitalization of the General Assembly, sustainable development, climate change and the peaceful settlement of disputes — are also our priorities. Our delegation will extend its full support to him in order to achieve those objectives.

I also pay tribute to Mr. John Ashe for his effective leadership of the General Assembly during its past session. We commend the Secretary-General's efforts to find diplomatic solutions to complex challenges to international peace and security. We appreciate his leadership in hosting the climate summit.

Extreme weather patterns are disrupting world economies. In Pakistan we have directly experienced such a calamity just recently. The monsoon floods in Pakistan have had a devastating impact. We are mobilizing all our resources and ingenuity to provide relief and to ensure recovery. The international community should intensify its efforts to move from awareness to commitments to actions on climate change, which is wreaking havoc with economies, particularly in developing countries.

This is a defining moment for the United Nations as it embarks upon the task of transforming the lives of billions of people by investing in sustainable development in the next 15 years. We are setting ourselves the vital target of eradicating poverty by 2030. To do that, we need to go beyond the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We need a new approach to eliminate conflict and violence and reduce inequality within and among nations. Only then will we be able to ensure healthy lives, empower women and girls, improve the quality of education, create jobs and guarantee the supply of affordable energy.

The time is ripe for such ambition and action. The sustainable development goals crafted so far must be woven into an overarching framework. We must prioritize them. First things should come first. Peace, stability and inclusive economic growth — all come first.

At the national level, we have launched our Vision 2025, which puts people first. It is inspired by our Founding Father, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, whose vision of a welfare State is based on the principles of justice, equity and responsibility.

In the coming decade, we will develop human and social capital through investment in education, health and gender parity; stimulate sustained economic growth; prioritize energy, water and food security; modernize the public sector and encourage private-sector-led entrepreneurship. We have determined that regional peace and security, political stability in the country, the rule of law and social justice are absolutely crucial for the realization of those goals. Above all, we will continue to work for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Energy is key to economic development. Pakistan co-chairs the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative. The objectives of the initiative are also our national goals.

It is my Government's aspiration and endeavour to build a peaceful neighbourhood by pursuing a policy of constructive engagement. In South Asia, our people have missed opportunities for prosperity because of unresolved conflicts. We have a choice today: continue with the status quo or seize the moment to resolve all outstanding issues and free up our shared energies for cooperation. To take this course of high statesmanship, we need more, not less, dialogue and diplomacy. We need to respect each other's rights and sensibilities. We must have relationships based on equality, mutual respect and transparency.

We were disappointed at the cancellation of the Foreign Secretary-level talks by India. The world community, too, rightly saw it as another missed opportunity. Pakistan is convinced that we must remain engaged in the dialogue process for settling disputes and building economic and trade relations. Let us not ignore the dividends of peace.

More than six decades ago, the United Nations adopted resolutions to hold a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are still waiting for the fulfilment of that promise. Many generations of Kashmiris have lived their lives under occupation, accompanied by violence and abuse of their fundamental rights. Kashmiri women in particular have suffered immensely. For decades, attempts have been made, both under United Nations auspices and bilaterally in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration, to resolve the dispute. The core issue of Jammu and Kashmir has to be resolved. It is the responsibility of the international community. We cannot draw a veil on the issue of Kashmir, until it is addressed in accordance with the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan is ready to work for a resolution of the issue through negotiations. Our support and advocacy for the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir is our historic commitment and a duty as a party to the Kashmir dispute.

Afghanistan is going through momentous security, political and economic transitions. As always, Pakistan stands in solidarity with the fraternal Afghan people. I congratulate the people of Afghanistan on the successful completion of the electoral process. We extend our warm felicitations and good wishes to the new Afghan leadership. It is our earnest hope that those landmark processes will culminate in the emergence of a stronger, more stable and unified Afghanistan. We also hope that the process of inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation will move forward, thereby contributing to greater harmony, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Pakistan remains committed to forging a deeper bilateral relationship with Afghanistan on the basis of equal security and shared prosperity. Our two nations confront common challenges, which call for greater cooperation and understanding. In the past year and a half, we have consciously reached out to Afghanistan to address difficult issues and build on convergences. We have made headway in that effort.

Pakistan has launched a massive operation to eliminate terrorism. Complementary counter-terrorism measures on the Afghan side of the border are essential to achieve optimal results.

This past summer, the people of Gaza were subjected to mass atrocities by Israel. We condemned the indiscriminate killings of civilians — which amounted to genocide. From this rostrum, I once again convey Pakistan's condolences and sympathies to the people of Palestine over their continuing plight.

We welcome the ceasefire between Gaza and Israel, but the next steps must also be taken. The blockade of Gaza must be lifted, Palestinian prisoners must be freed and illegal settlements must be halted. The United Nations should facilitate a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We call on all parties in Syria to renounce military and militant means and to hold dialogue to restore peace and stability in their historic land. The emergence of new militant entities in the Middle East once again illustrates that terrorism is a global threat. This primitive force in Iraq and Syria is an aberration, which has the sanction of no religion. It must be countered with unified and resolute will.

We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We are fighting the terrorism that has been planted on Pakistan's soil. Our valiant soldiers are laying down their lives to take out terrorists and tear down their evil networks. The entire nation is behind them.

In the past 13 years, as a front-line State, we have made enormous sacrifices in blood and resources. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed or injured. Our economy has also lost hundreds of billions of dollars in direct costs and denied investment opportunities. Yet in that fight, each time a soldier falls, another takes his place — proudly. It is the resolve of our nation to fight this scourge to the finish.

At the same time, we have made a plan of action for the relief and rehabilitation of nearly 1 million internally dislocated persons. That includes a strategy to prevent the return and resurgence of militancy and to create a safe environment for local people.

Pakistan's strong commitment to peacekeeping is rooted in our foreign policy and in our belief that every nation should contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Inspired by that ideal, Pakistan has maintained high levels of participation in United Nations peacekeeping and has become the largest troop-contributing country. We are contributing more than 1,100 troops to the Central African Republic operation, despite the dire situation there.

As a responsible nuclear-weapon State, we will continue to support the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and pursue a policy of nuclear restraint and credible minimum deterrence. Pakistan is not participating in any arms race in the region. Yet we cannot be oblivious to the emerging security scenarios and buildup of armaments. We, too, have the obligation to maintain a robust and reliable deterrence.

I would like to reiterate the need for an interlinked mechanism for pursuing nuclear restraint, conventional equilibrium and conflict resolution. To promote stability, we are prepared to explore new confidence-building measures.

Pakistan has maintained the highest standards of nuclear safety and security. At the last summit at The Hague that I attended, Pakistan's recent nuclear measures, especially the establishment of a centre of excellence, were appreciated.

Pakistan is a State with advanced nuclear technology and more than 40 years of experience. Pakistan is a mainstream partner in the international non-proliferation regime. Pakistan also has a stringent national export-control system that is fully harmonized with international export-control regimes. Though a non-member, we are abiding by their guidelines.

Pakistan ought to be a part of those export-control regimes, especially the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Pakistan also qualifies for full access to civil nuclear technology to overcome its energy shortages and spur economic growth.

The ongoing reform of the United Nations must be comprehensive. We support a reform of the Security Council that reflects the interests of all Member States — small, medium-sized and large — and not the ambitions of a few. There should be no new permanent seats in the Council. That would be contrary to the democratic character of this world body. We want the Council to become more representative, equitable, accountable and transparent.

We meet here today on the cusp of a new era for the international community. Never before has the United Nations embraced such lofty goals to banish poverty, stimulate development, protect the environment and foster peace, as it will during this session. The future of our planet hinges on our decisions. Let us deliver them with full responsibility and wisdom. Pakistan will assist the Assembly and the United Nations as a whole to make the world a better place for all humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta.

Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Muscat (Malta): I would like first to congratulate Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I also wish to express my appreciation for the able manner in which the outgoing President presided over the Assembly.

Allow me also to pay tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless commitment in the service of peace. I also thank the men and women serving the United Nations in the field. They do so often at great personal risk, and their courage and determination is a source of inspiration for the Organization.

It was 50 years ago that Malta became an independent State. That was the year when Nelson

Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment in South Africa, and when Martin Luther King received the Nobel Peace Prize. For a small, nascent State such as Malta, it was a year of promise and new beginnings as it took its place among the Members of the United Nations. It is with a deep sense of pride that I stand before members here today to note the role our country has played over the past 50 years to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Time and again, this family of nations has found a trusted and reliable partner in my country, willing to contribute, in ways large and small, to the cause of international peace and security. I shall mention just two. The first is Malta's association with the Law of the Sea — a widely acknowledged role, as we were instrumental in the launching of the international process that would eventually lead to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The second example, which came shortly after that, in 1988, is our being among the first Member States to highlight the risks of climate change to the global community within the forum of the United Nations. An almost alien concept at the time, today climate change is one of the main items on the global agenda. I pay tribute to Arvid Pardo and former President Ċensu Tabone, who piloted those events. Evidently, our size did not determine our ambitions then. Neither will it determine them now.

We live in an increasingly uncertain world — a world where the power balances that we have known in recent decades have started to shift. What made sense in the past may not make sense in the future — not too distant a future, but the future that we can already see forming before our own eyes. If the Assembly will allow me, I wish to share some thoughts by presenting five challenges — five of the many that I feel we, the United Nations, need to face up to now.

Undoubtedly, the first challenge is the conflict in the Middle East. We need a return to meaningful negotiations, and I stress the word meaningful. The ongoing tit-for-tat, the culture of hatred and intolerance, the self-righteous proclamations and the recriminations are leaving nothing but death and destruction. If we build walls around people, it is no wonder that they will dig tunnels to escape. The current frame of mind will lead nowhere. Too many innocent civilians have died, too many children have been buried. We need statesmanship from the politicians on both sides to resolve the conflict. Risk-takers and courageous negotiators must be willing to make the right choices — not the most convenient choices, and not the most popular, perhaps, but the most enduring ones — that will bring about change leading to peace.

Our second challenge must be putting an end to the ghastly war in Syria, which is fast becoming a forgotten conflict of major proportions. Like many other countries here, last year my country called for a stop to the atrocities (see A/68/PV.12). Are we simply going to repeat that call this year as well? Let us stop this humanitarian disaster, which, as we know, is now morphing into the new threats we have heard so much about. The adoption of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) demonstrated that we can act together, so let us act. We call on the Security Council to assume its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations and to act urgently and decisively to bring about an end to the bloodshed.

That brings me to the third challenge. As if we have not yet learned the lessons from Syria, or realized what sectarian divisions can lead to, we are allowing the problems in Libya to continue almost unabated. We are fast witnessing a descent into another forgotten conflict. We need to help the Libyan people take their country forward. There is a bright future for Liby, but Libyans themselves need to find the hope necessary to realize it. They can begin to do so only with the help of the international community. The United Nations can and must provide capacity-building and security to bring about stability and prosperity.

Of course, we are heartened to see the constructive role already being played by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. Yet immense challenges remain, in particular in restoring the country's security and law and order. The divisions are rooted in many causes, but they can be overcome. This situation cannot be allowed to continue further. Its repercussions are severe not just for the Libyans themselves or for the country's immediate neighbours, such as ourselves, but further afield. The international community cannot risk a takeover by extremists of that crucial country.

Together with our international partners, especially our colleagues in the European Union, Malta continues to actively support the efforts of the Libyan people to move forward. We are providing all the assistance within our means to aid the wounded. We will stand for dialogue and reconciliation in Libya. We will stand for peace and resolution. We will continue to draw attention to this festering wound. Our Libyan friends deserve that. Disarmament and national reconciliation are the prerequisites for Libya to move forward. The United Nations must be ready to answer the calls for action from the Libyan people themselves.

If the Assembly will allow, I will directly address our friends in Libya in their own language, which is so similar to my own.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The families and the children of Libya deserve a true future. Freedom and justice for all Libyans can be achieved only if differences are resolved through dialogue and compromise.

(*spoke in English*)

Please allow me now to move to the fourth challenge facing the world today, namely, the spread of extremism and intolerance.

We are living through a period of transnational allegiances in which we are seeing the globalization of hatred — one during which extremists are increasingly interconnected through networks and inventions whose main purpose should be progress and education. This is a time when disenchanted youths are radicalized into movements that know no limits. We need to look beyond the borders of our nation States and work together, if we are to face up to the threats posed by extremists.

Nobody is immune from what is undoubtedly the biggest threat to world stability and peace. Just as the horrendous carnage of two world wars led to a shift in our thinking, the reality we are living in now needs to force another shift. We have to spread a culture of mutual understanding and humanity — not because it serves us, but because it serves our peoples and will serve our future as a global community.

Clearly, the area of the world from the Mediterranean to the Middle East, and beyond, demands our utmost attention. People are being pushed to the brink. They are resorting to increasingly desperate measures. Men, women and children are risking their lives to cross conflict-ridden zones and hostile deserts. They are taking to the seas without realizing the dangers that await them. As I also did last year, I reiterate that more attention must be focused on the plight of illegal immigrants in the Mediterranean, which I believe is the fifth challenge we face.

With all our limitations, Malta is doing its utmost to daily save lives — as our neighbour and friend Italy is also doing. Again I call on the Assembly and the international community to help to stop the great human tragedies that come with risky crossings across the Mediterranean. The States receiving the waves of migrants cannot stand up to the challenge alone: no country in the world can solve the problem of illegal immigration alone. Just last week we witnessed in our own seas yet another tragedy, which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees described as mass murder.

Closer cooperation among the countries of origin, transit and destination is needed. The United Nations and its agencies are already helping, but they must continue to help in addressing the causes. Better governance, better resources and better development policies are needed. We need better enforcement mechanisms and stronger penalties to stop and punish the criminals — the human traffickers. We need better implementation of internationally agreed commitments. We need all of that and more, and we need to remember to keep in mind the well-being of the human beings, the families and children who are the victims of all that tragedy.

As a Mediterranean country, Malta cannot but call for the world's attention to those challenges, which are threatening not only the security of the region but also its development and growth. Such threats are preventing the Mediterranean Sea Basin from reaching its full potential, which is just waiting to be unleashed if only weapons were traded for books and hatred for education. I reiterate my strong conviction that the Mediterranean Basin needs to be given our immediate attention in order to once again become the home of great civilizations that it is and a cross-cultural haven where women and men of different beliefs and traditions work, trade and mingle in tolerance and tranquillity.

It has always been our belief that there cannot be peace in Europe without peace in the Mediterranean. Today's unprecedented levels of interconnectivity lead us to believe that peace in the Mediterranean is a prerequisite for global stability. Malta will continue to serve as a voice of reason, while striving to unite the Mediterranean. Our only weapon is our historical and natural vocation for peace. Our resolve grows only stronger in such testing times.

The challenges that we face cannot stop us in our tracks. We can address them if we truly believe in acting as the United Nations. A year from now, we will analyse the Millennium Development Goals and will, hopefully, agree on sustainable development goals for the twenty-first century. With an effective development agenda, we can address the causes of conflict in a sustainable manner and can overcome the poverty that contributes to illegal migration. But we need to be ambitious.

Over the past 50 years, my country has shown that it has been and can be ambitious in favour of peace, progress and prosperity. It has promoted and will continue to promote the broadest possible dialogue among the countries of our region. I take pride in noting that only a few months ago, Malta, together with Algeria, France, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States, jointly launched the International Institute for Justice and Rule of Law, hosted by my country. The Institute will collaborate with the United Nations and other international and non-governmental organizations to provide training to lawmakers, police, prosecutors, judges and prison officials to deal with terrorism and transnational crime, with a general emphasis on the rule of law. We hope that such work will eventually serve as a best practice for the benefit of the wider global community.

We are also fully engaged within the Commonwealth, which brings together a third of the world population, in order to help achieve convergence on some of the challenges that lie ahead, including the sustainable development goals and climate change. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that will take place in Malta next year will serve as an ideal platform for the discussion of such issues, especially ahead of the Paris summit on climate change. Those are some of the ways in which a small country in Europe at the centre of the Mediterranean, such as Malta, will continue to contribute to the fostering of peace and security in our region and in the world.

Fifty years may seem like a long time, but I can affirm that 50 years from now my country will remain steadfast in its ambitions and in our determination in favour of peace and prosperity. Malta will remain a proud Member of the United Nations and a beacon of stability in the Mediterranean.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic

Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Salam (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first to congratulate the President on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I would also like to thank Mr. John Ashe for his work during his presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. Our appreciation also goes to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/69/1).

We meet today on the eve of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, to which my country had the honour to contribute. That milestone reminds us of the need to draw lessons and explore the best ways to put an end to war and violence and to mobilize international efforts to combat terrorism and terrorists.

I wish to convey the concerns of my country, Lebanon, which is at the crossroads of a turbulent region. Today Lebanon is the target of a fierce terrorist onslaught being perpetrated by obscurantist and criminal groups. They have attacked many parts of Lebanon and caused the loss of military and civilian lives, as well as considerable material damage. Last month, terrorists kidnapped a number of soldiers and security officers. They took them hostage in order to bring pressure to bear on and to blackmail the Lebanese authorities. They brutally executed three of the detainees. Such crimes have impeded the ongoing indirect negotiations that my Government was conducting with the assistance of friendly countries to secure the release of the soldiers. I would like to underscore that compromise on our firm beliefs is not an option. We remain focused on the release of our soldiers, while preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of our country.

In combating terrorism, the Lebanese people stand united with its armed forces, which represent the main pillar on which we depend to safeguard our national sovereignty, security and peace. Our Government continues to rally the necessary support for its forces to be able to fulfil their duty. In that regard, Lebanon values the generous donation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support our armed forces. We also pay tribute to the initiative of the Secretary-General, who launched the International Support Group for Lebanon last September here in New York city. We express our satisfaction and reassurance over the outcomes of the meetings held by the Support Group this year in Paris and Rome.

The current international mobilization against terror reflects the international community's awareness of the alarming situation in our region and the need to extinguish the flames of violence and prevent the spread of such attacks. Lebanon underscores the need for regional and international cooperation to fight terrorism. We welcome the Security Council resolutions on the subject, in particular resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014). Lebanon calls on its brothers and friends around the world to safeguard and protect it from regional power struggles.

Our fight against terrorism is not new. For years, Lebanon has suffered under the threat posed by political crimes, which have targeted many of its leaders, in particular former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and prominent media figures and intellectuals. We continue to follow the work of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. We look forward to the establishment of the truth in order to put an end to impunity, enable justice to be served and deter criminals.

The events unfolding in vast areas of Syria and Iraq constitute human crimes that cannot be understood or accepted by any intellect or faith. Perpetrated in the name of Islam, such crimes have cost the lives of tens of thousands of Muslim civilians and have caused unprecedented waves of displaced people. In addition, those crimes have destabilized national entities, divided societies and destroyed human and material resources.

That terrorist onslaught targets religious groups that since time immemorial have been an essential component of the social fabric of the region and a fundamental part of the social and cultural diversity that has long characterized the eastern Mediterranean. In the past few months, the entire world has witnessed attacks against Christians and Yazidis in Iraq, their forced expulsion and the destruction of their property and holy sites. Lebanon considers attacks against religions, their followers and sacred places to be an offence against human dignity and a violation of the freedom of religious belief and practice enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the International Bill of Human Rights, respect for which is guaranteed by our Lebanese Constitution.

Lebanon is proud to be the only country in the Arab and Islamic worlds where the President of the Republic is a Christian citizen. That confirms that our country, despite its political crises, has been a paragon of diversity in the Middle East, an exceptional example of coexistence and interaction among followers of different religions and sects and a model totally opposed to the notion of a racist State. I take this opportunity to reiterate before the General Assembly the Lebanese Government's call for the election of a new Christian President of the Republic as soon as possible.

The painful and worrisome war in Syria, which has continued for more than four years, has driven nearly 1.5 million displaced Syrians to Lebanon — a number that is equivalent to one-third of the Lebanese population. In order to fully understand the dimensions of that situation, one would have to imagine 100 million people flooding into the United States of America and spreading out randomly through its cities, towns, schools and parks, with their related urgent needs and requirements, posing an unbearable burden at the economic, humanitarian, social, educational, health and security levels.

That huge number of displaced people weighs heavily on the Lebanese infrastructure, which already has structural problems. It puts pressure on the national economy, where growth has dropped to almost 0 per cent owing to the regional situation, which represents a loss of $7.5 billion for Lebanon, according to World Bank estimates. This reality constitutes a national disaster for us. The problem of the displaced Syrians, with all its serious economic, social and security implications, is not — and should not be — a purely Lebanese problem. It is a major regional crisis that we put before the international community, which must share that enormous burden with Lebanon. Such a burden cannot be borne by any country alone, no matter how large.

Lebanon reiterates its concern for the unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. In our Government policy statement, we have reaffirmed our commitment to the policy of keeping our distance in order to protect ourselves from the repercussions of the crisis in the neighbouring country.

On the eighth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), Lebanon asserts its commitment to implementing all of the resolution's provisions. We believe that it will strengthen stability and security in southern Lebanon and contribute to extending the State's authority over its entire territory. We renew our appeal to the international community to compel Israel to fulfil all its obligations in that regard, to stop violating Lebanese sovereignty from the land, the sea and the air and to fully cooperate with the United Nations peacekeeping forces of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in order to demarcate what is left of the Blue Line and immediately withdraw from the area north of Ghajar, the Sheba'a Farms and the Kfar Shouba Hills.

We also wish to reaffirm Lebanon's full rights to its territorial waters and the natural oil and gas resources within its exclusive economic zone. Lebanon cannot fail to acknowledge the role of UNIFIL and the ongoing cooperation and coordination between UNIFIL and the Lebanese army. Lebanon would like to thank all nations that contribute to the Force, the Force leaders and the members of the Force for their dedication in the service of the stability and security of civilians in southern Lebanon.

Last month, the Gaza Strip was subjected to a new Israeli aggression, which killed hundreds of civilians, displaced more than a quarter of the population and destroyed homes, hospitals and infrastructure. Lebanon, which has paid dearly as a result of the repeated Israeli attacks, calls for legal accountability for the war crimes committed by Israel and for that country to be held accountable for its actions in order to prevent impunity.

Lebanon believes that Israel is responsible for frustrating all efforts to reach a peaceful settlement based on the two-State solution. It stresses the need for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid terms of reference for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, adopted at the Beirut summit in 2002.

Today, the Levant seems to be the stage for dark and arbitrary tragedies, where the most recent manifestations of human savagery are being played out. Today, the Levant seems to be hostage to ignorance, extremism and obscurantism, plunged into a hatred arising from a distant past and guided by a fanaticism and instincts that yield only bloodshed. However, that troubled area was, is and will be home to many people who, like all other human beings, have land, homes, tales, dreams and a history. They are individuals who are eager to live as free and equal citizens in free and stable countries. They have sons and daughters who seek better opportunities for engagement in the world and a better place to live.

Humankind owes a debt to our Levant. We gave humankind enlightenment when darkness, extremism and ignorance were crippling the other side of the world. We still have much to offer and to add to the tremendous development of human progress and creativity. The world must stop counting our dead. It must meet its obligation and seek to establish peace in that tormented part of the world — a peace that is based on law, justice, respect for the sovereignty of nations and the protection of their security and territorial integrity, the safeguarding of the fundamental rights of individuals and groups, including their right to enjoy their wealth, and the protection of religious and ethnic diversity.

We, the Lebanese people, both at home and in every corner of the world, look to the United Nations for assistance. At the same time, we are determined to overcome the current crisis, as we have done so many times before. We are confident that, together, we will not allow any person, any circumstance or any party to extinguish the beacons of freedom, democracy, diversity, pluralism, knowledge and human rights in Lebanon.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tammam Salam, President of the Council of Ministers of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Malaysia

Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Razak (Malaysia): I would like to begin by congratulating the President on his election. His wisdom and experience will stand him in good stead as he guides the General Assembly.

I would like to pay tribute to the health workers who are fighting Ebola in West Africa. Malaysia was able to contribute more than 20 million rubber gloves to help the doctors and nurses who are working to stop the outbreak. Our prayers are with them.

I also wish to thank all those who came to Malaysia's aid in this difficult year. Flights MH-370 and MH-17 were tragedies that will stay with us forever. As we mourn the loss of life, we take heart from the compassion shown by our friends. Their support will not be forgotten. We thank our friends and allies who are giving their time and their resources to help find Flight MH-370. Men and women continue to risk their lives searching the deepest oceans. We owe them our gratitude and our commitment. We will not give up the search. We are also grateful to our international partners that are working together to investigate the loss of Flight MH-17. Malaysia will continue to seek justice for those who died. We urge all parties to continue to cooperate with the investigation. We also hope that those two tragedies will change the global aviation system for the better and that nations will unite behind new standards for aircraft tracking and overflying conflict zones.

Four years ago, I stood before the General Assembly and called for a global movement of moderates to counter extremism (see A/65/PV.19). Last year, I spoke of the conflict between Sunni and Shia that is tearing the Muslim world apart (see A/68/PV.18). Now those two forces — violent extremism and religious intolerance — have joined hands beneath a black flag. Two countries fractured by war face a new threat — a self-declared Islamic State. Its victims are Sunni and Shia, Yazidi and Kurd — anyone who will not bow before the sword.

That so-called State, torn from existing nations with violence, rules by violence. Its authority is maintained by forced conversions and public executions. Its militants have destroyed lives and communities. They have destabilized fragile nations and threatened regional security. Yet their dark ambition stretches further still. They challenge the very notion of the State. They call to our youth with the siren song of illegitimate jihad. They demand that all Muslims swear allegiance to their so-called caliph. That demand will never be met. We reject the so-called Islamic State. We reject such a State defined by extremism. We condemn the violence being committed in the name of Islam.

Around the world, Muslims have watched in despair as our religion — a religion of peace — has been used to justify atrocities. We have turned away in horror at the crucifixions and the beheadings. We have mourned the sons who have been stolen and the daughters who have been sold. We know that the threat to world peace and security is not Islam but extremism — intolerant, violent and militant extremism. The actions of those militants are beyond conscience and belief. They violate the teachings of Islam, the example set by the Prophet Muhammad and the principles of Islamic law.

As we speak, some Syrians and Iraqis are being forced to abandon their faith. Yet the Koran states: "There shall be no compulsion in religion" (*The Holy Koran II:256*). They are being forced from their homes and forced to convert to Islam. Yet the Koran says: "To you be your religion, and to me my religion" (*ibid., CIX:6*). If they do not comply, they face death. Yet the protection of life is a fundamental precept of Islamic law, and the killing of civilians, even in war, is prohibited in Islam.

The question is: How should we respond? In the past, when the world mobilized to fight extremists, we launched wars without planning for peace. We attacked one evil only to see a greater evil emerge. This time must be different. This time, we must defeat not only the extremists but also their ideas. We must confront the heresy of a State conceived by ungodly men and enforced through violence. In its place, we must advance the true Islam — the Islam founded on the principles of peace, tolerance and respect, as set out in the Koran, the Sunna and the Hadith. There are key things we must do.

First, security and statehood must be returned to the people of Syria and Iraq. Malaysia co-sponsored Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) on foreign terrorist fighters to strengthen our commitment to galvanizing international action to combat terrorism. We call on the international community to stop the flow of money and recruits to extremist groups. We continue to offer humanitarian assistance under the ambit of the United Nations or internationally recognized bodies to those who are displaced by the fighting. Attacks on militant targets should, at all cost, avoid collateral damage.

Secondly, we must pursue a different kind of politics. The emergence of such militants is a symptom of political failure, of poor governance in fragile States and the conflict that still rages between Sunni and Shia. We must break the cycle where one group gains power only to wield it against the other, and where marginalization leads to radicalization, as people lose confidence in the State's ability to provide both security and coexistence. Individuals and ethnic and religious groups need to feel that they have a stake in a nation's success, not its failure. We should therefore commit to more inclusive politics. That is a difficult task. It demands pragmatism and compromise and must come from within.

Malaysia stands ready to share its experience in marginalizing extremism, in maintaining a multireligious country, where different faiths coexist and prosper, and in showing that Islam can not only succeed but also drive progress and development in a pluralistic society. Like all nations, we have had our growing pains. Stability is never permanent. It must be actively maintained. But in Malaysia, there are streets in which mosques, temples and churches stand side by side. Ours is a society in which religions may differ, but they do so in peace, in the knowledge that we are all citizens of one nation.

We believe that such a moderate approach can make a valuable contribution to fragile States and international affairs alike. It is a philosophy that we have applied when acting as an honest broker in peace processes in the southern Philippines and elsewhere. It is a principle that we will pursue as we chair the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) next year, when it forms the 600-million strong ASEAN Community, with greater political security and economic and sociocultural integration.

In the coming weeks, Malaysia will work with all interested partners to move the moderation agenda forward at the United Nations. That work informs our bid for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the coming term. The moderation agenda involves us all. The fight against extremism is not about Christians versus Muslims or Muslims versus Jews but moderates versus extremists of all religions. We need to rally a coalition of moderates — those willing to reclaim their religion and pursue the path to peace.

I therefore reiterate my call on the leading figures in all the great religious traditions. Let us join together to ensure that religion is the source of healing and blessing rather than conflict and destruction. In that respect, I welcome Pope Francis's visit to Palestine and his efforts to bring moderate Palestinians and Israelis together to pray for peace. By demonstrating moderation in the political process, we can ensure that no one is left outside society. By practising moderation in religion, we can marginalize the extremists. By committing to moderation here at the United Nations, we can show that the world is willing to fight extremism not just with short-term military operations but with long-term plans.

The security response of the international community and a commitment to more inclusive politics on the part of affected countries will remove two of the conditions that allow extremism to take hold. However, in order to defeat the extremists, we must undermine their authority and erode their appeal. We must confront their propaganda. We must defeat the message that seduces young people into acts of violence. And we must address any legitimate grievances that drive people to extremism, be they political or economic. In short, we must win the hearts and minds of those who would serve the so-called caliph.

That is the work of a generation. To begin, we should focus on the real-world conditions that allow disillusion to grow. That means building sustainable economies that bring opportunities for our young people and addressing legitimate concerns that drive radicalization.

Malaysia, like so many countries around the world, was appalled by the brutal violence against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. We strongly condemn Israel's disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks on Gaza and its continuing violations of international and human rights law. The use of heavy weapons in civilian areas and the obliteration of houses, mosques and schools were an affront to common decency. We condemn such acts not just for the innocent lives taken but for the message that they send, namely, that religions cannot coexist and that the international community cannot enforce international law and protect the rights of Palestinians. Their plight is one of the most effective rallying calls for those who claim that the international system is broken.

Let us therefore unite to find a peaceful, just and lasting outcome that brings dignity and security to the people of Palestine. That should be predicated on a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. That will bring dignity and security for the people of Palestine, who have suffered so much, and will allow us to redouble our efforts to bring peace to other parts of the world where conflict fuels extremism.

We must also understand why those militants succeed in drawing people to their cause. The extremists call upon Muslims to pledge their allegiance to their self-proclaimed caliphates in Syria and Iraq, in Nigeria and Somalia and in Kenya and Libya. They reach out to a people in search of a State. The fact that some answer that call is testament to our failure. We have failed to uphold a vision of moderate and inclusive Islamic development and to tackle isolation in our own communities.The fight against extremists must be won not just in Syria and Iraq but also in Britain, Belgium, the United States and Malaysia. We have managed to prevent extremism from gaining a foothold in our country. Yet even a few Malaysians have been lured by foreign terrorist fighters, who led them to Iraq and Syria.

Countries must educate, include and, where necessary, confront those at risk of radicalization. Our religious leaders must continue to show that faith and society are best aligned under a just rule of law. We must continue to make the case that the moderate path is the righteous path — the path that Allah set out for us when he said, "we have made you into a community that is moderate, justly balanced" (*ibid., II:143*).

We must confront the myth that committing atrocities in the name of an Islamic State is an act of faith and that death in the service of that aim brings martyrdom. The extremists use that distorted narrative as a recruitment tool. To counter that deception, Muslims should work together to promote a greater understanding of what a true Islamic State means. An international conference of scholars of Islamic law, convened by my Government to define the true meaning of an Islamic State, agreed that for a State to be called Islamic, it must deliver economic, political and social justice. It must protect and further the six objectives of Islamic law: the right to life, religion, family, property, dignity and intellect — the same universal rights that are enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

The so-called Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and the methods used to declare it have violated every single one of those objectives. It is therefore neither Islamic nor a State. Individuals, religious leaders and nations have said that and must continue to do so and to advocate for Islamic principles within a framework of tolerance, understanding and peace.That, after all, is the true nature of Islam; a religion of peace that values coexistence, mutual comprehension and learning, even in times of struggle. When 70 prisoners of war were captured during the Battle of Badr, for example, the Prophet Muhammad was urged to slay them. The Prophet not only protected the lives of innocent civilians, he also spared enemy combatants.

It is that spirit of understanding and compassion that we should continue to embrace and espouse. Now is the time to advance a vision of peace and moderation. Let us call for a global community of understanding. Let us prove that we can honour the words of the Prophet and build balanced and just societies, where different faiths live and prosper in peace. Let us show that Muslims, united in faith, can be a powerful force for progress, knowledge and justice, as we were in the greatest periods of our history, as we can be today, and as we will be tomorrow.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for the statement he has just made.

Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 2.45 p.m.

United Nations

A/69/PV.13

General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

13th plenary meeting
Friday, 26 September 2014, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

In the absence of the President, Mrs. Baaro (Kiribati), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mohamud: It is a pleasure to join the Assembly today. Yesterday a journalist asked me to describe Somalia in 15 seconds. First, let me say that Somalis are great storytellers, so asking a Somali to say anything in 15 seconds is very difficult. I really had to think about where to begin. I told him that if he could think of a problem, then Somalia has it, and often at the same time as other problems — war, piracy, extremist terrorist groups, famine, droughts, floods. But that was the Somalia of yesterday, not the Somalia of today. I fear that many people's experience of Somalia is confined to films — such as the recent *Captain Phillips* and re-runs of *Black Hawk Down* — or YouTube scenes of the horrific Westgate Mall incident in Kenya, or an ever-growing number of titles on library bookshelves that include the words "failed State", or references to a long war. But if we shrink our perspective to just that glimpse, we miss the beauty of the very different picture that we are painting right now in Somalia. The Somalia I lead as President is a very different country. My Somalia is not a 15-second summary of problems. It is not a Somalia of failure.

We may still be fragile, but we are no longer a broken State. September of 2012 marked a milestone for Somalia with the establishment of a new Federal Government built on national consensus and universally recognized by the international community. At its start, the Federal Government of Somalia faced multiple complex challenges, a stark lack of resources and only very basic institutional and Government structures. The country was divided, with no clear path to unification. Al-Shabaab and other militia groups controlled most of our territory. The task ahead of us was daunting and the expectations from both our people and our international partners were very high. Everything was a priority, from security to political inclusivity, and from health care and education to private-sector development and basic economic reform.

We faced the significant challenge of having to build frameworks and institutions while simultaneously delivering immediate, tangible benefits for our people, in the form of schools, hospitals, roads and more. We had to deliver on that long list of interrelated priorities while simultaneously dealing with a politically fragmented environment and fighting a war against terrorist

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groups. And we have succeeded. The foundation for the future has been laid through our clear military defeat of Al-Shabaab, which has been made possible only through the joint efforts of the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission to Somalia. More than 70 per cent of Somalia's southern and central regions has now been liberated from the scourge of Al-Shabaab and restored to the control of the Federal Government of Somalia.

Over the past two years we have focused on building foundations and laying the groundwork for reform. We have developed legal frameworks, governance structures and public financial management reform processes. We have formalized Somalia's presence in the international community, strengthened our relationships with neighbouring countries, restructured key institutions, established forums for dialogue, developed a path for political reform and put in place the architecture for linking international support to our priorities through the New Deal Somali Compact.

We have made major progress in reforming public financial management, putting in place better accountability measures, controls and governance structures. Key legislation has been drafted, budget policy developed and the capacity of the offices of the Accountant General and Auditor General strengthened. An annual budget, developed with the implementation of Government-wide work plans and priorities in mind, has been delivered. A new governor and board of directors have been appointed for the Central Bank of Somalia, which we launched from scratch. A financial governance committee, constituting an advisory body held jointly by the Federal Government and international financial institutions, has been established to provide greater transparency and oversight of financial transactions in Somalia.

We can take heart in the fact that distinct progress has been made in moving the country from failed-State status to that of a nascent nation with functioning institutions. Today, in September 2014, I am confidently able to say that, with the support of the Somali people and the engagement of the international community, Somalia has undergone a remarkable transformation. Today we have a country that is beginning to unite as a nation, behind a vision that in 2016 will see a federal and united Somalia, a Somalia that will meet our aspirations for a better future.

But we cannot rest there. Somalia has always had an enormous capacity for playing a long game, and now more than ever we must stay our course. Somalia is at a critical juncture in its efforts to achieve security and stability. This past year has seen a rise in terrorist groups and activities around the world. Today, the reach of terrorists is not confined to one country; it is a global issue that requires global action. More than any other fragile State today, Somalia has significantly advanced in its fight against terrorism. We are winning the war, but we must also win the peace. President Obama spoke earlier this week of being at a crossroads of war and peace (see A/69/PV.5). As Somalis, we know better than any other nation the truth of that statement. We are at that juncture.

That is why we know that solutions cannot be only military in nature. Yesterday we were reminded of the origins behind the establishment of the United Nations. We were reminded of the power of peaceful political reconciliation. Military intervention can end war, but it cannot propagate peace. Dialogue, reconciliation, forgiveness — those are the tools of peacebuilders, the tools of nation-builders.

As President of Somalia, I reaffirm our commitment to denying extremist ideology and its servants any hiding place in Somalia. Somalia's strategic location makes it a gateway between the Arabian peninsula and the African continent. We cannot defeat Al-Shabaab only to allow other extremists, such as the militant group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, to find fertile ground. Although the security situation in Somalia is improving and Al-Shabaab is becoming a spent force, we cannot afford to rest until we achieve a final victory. We must strengthen Somalia and make it into a firewall, both for security purposes and ideologically. Somalia must be strengthened in order to prevent the African continent from being once again invaded by violent extremists who target innocent civilians, spreading their ideology of death. Solutions must be sought by applying the rule of law, pursuing human rights and affording access to justice. People must be allowed to determine their own future and to find their own place in that brilliant future.

We must not forget the importance of political reconciliation and reform in maintaining long-term stability and creating an enabling environment for development gains. Two years ago, it quickly became clear that the formation of a unified and federal Somalia was the key to delivering peace and building sustainable security. The Vision 2016 framework was developed to encapsulate that important national goal. Vision

2016 outlines the framework for federalism through reconciliation, the adoption of a revised permanent constitution through a referendum and the path to democratic elections. It is a tall order that cannot be overstated.

The Federal Government has undertaken to revise our Provisional Constitution by 2016 and adopt it by means of a public referendum. We have undertaken to deliver a federal Somalia made up of member states. We have undertaken to deliver credible, national elections. We have not failed on the side of ambition, and we must not fail to deliver on our ambition. And we are delivering. Led by the Federal Government, together with existing and emerging regional stakeholders inside Somalia, we have made significant progress in the formation of interim regional administrations in the south-west and central regions of Somalia through dialogue and consultations.

The Constitution Review and Implementation Commission was set up in May 2014 and started work on reviewing the current Provisional Constitution of Somalia. The approval and adoption of the Provisional Constitution is critical to an inclusive political settlement that paves the way for sustainable security and development in Somalia.

In order to create a federal State, it will be essential to ensure the full participation of subfederal administrations in the political transformation of Somalia. The Boundaries and Federation Commission will be established and will devise the mechanisms for supporting the process of federating Somalia. The National Independent Electoral Commission will be endorsed by Parliament by the end of 2014. The Federal Government is committed to inclusivity and, while observing the principles of Somali-Somali dialogue, is taking concrete steps to engage all Somalis, including women and minority groups, in the political process of nation-building. We have seen great progress in connecting the Government to the Somali public, thanks to the improvement of service delivery, particularly in the area of education. In two years we have enrolled close to 100,000 students in public schools and appointed 2,000 teachers.

We are investing in the strengthening of our Somali national forces. The Somali National Army is a key element in defeating Al-Shabaab, and we are working with our international partners to ensure that we have a well-trained, well-equipped, integrated national army and other defence institutions in place, so that Somalia will one day be well able to defend its own peace and participate in international peace.

However, it grieves me to report today that the humanitarian situation in Somalia is extremely critical. About 3.2 million Somalis need life-saving or livelihood assistance right now. A terrible mix of drought, rising food prices, increasing malnutrition and insecurity is plunging Somalia into a humanitarian crisis not dissimilar to the horrific famine of 2011. Out of a population of 12.3 million in Somalia, more than 1 million people face acute food insecurity today and an equal number of people are internally displaced. Three months ago the humanitarian community and the Federal Government sounded the alarm about the impending crisis. Humanitarian response plans were prepared and launched. Swift action by the Federal Government to set up an interim interministerial committee and interventions with humanitarian partners and donors has mitigated the current crisis. However, a sustained and scaled-up response is required now to prevent a free fall. The humanitarian appeal for Somalia remains severely underfunded. Only 32 per cent of the requested $933 million has been received. This situation must be addressed urgently. As we enter the last third of the year, more than half a billion dollars is still required for life-saving activities. Over the past 18 months, Somalia has seen a significant amount of progress in its political, economic and development sectors. If the current humanitarian situation deteriorates into a crisis, all those gains will be undermined. We have come too far to allow that to happen.

It is clear that, despite challenges, Somalia is moving forward on the path of integration, inclusivity and peace. We are leaving behind the disorder and discord spread by a distorted ideology. I was told a remarkable story recently, a true story that I think illustrates perfectly the power of reconciliation and the triumph of compassion over brutality. One of our Somali non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is running a social reconciliation programme in some remote areas of Somalia. It consists of 12 weeks of intense facilitated discussions about truth, designed to disrupt the cycle of violence and create a safe space where people can tell their stories and, through that exercise, nurture understanding. A young man whose family had moved to another country when his father was murdered by another man from his village heard of the programme. He heard that the Somali NGO was training programme facilitators, people who would be able to move freely from one village to another and teach others the way of peace and reconciliation. Rather than as an opportunity to pursue peace, this young man, filled with anger at his father's murder, saw it as the ideal way for him to exact revenge. He would return to Somalia, undertake the training course, gain access to his family's old village under a false pretext, and while there he would kill his father's murderer.

He therefore came home to Somalia, bought a weapon, underwent the training and went to the village. He made sure that his father's murderer attended the training, while harbouring the destruction of his father's enemy in his heart. But then, something started to happen. As he helped the villagers tell their stories of violence, of the endless cycle of horror, of the terrible choices they had had to make, his heart softened. He understood that any choice that involved violence was a not a choice at all. One day he stood up at the training centre, addressed his father's murderer, explained that he had plotted to kill him and begged his forgiveness.

In a way, this one man's story echoes the national history that we are beginning to tell in Somalia today, namely, that our future will not be built on the ashes of revenge. It will not be built on the stones of violence. We reaffirm our choice of peace. We reaffirm that reconciliation, the path that we have chosen, will be won through dialogue, through inclusive politics, through creating a shared vision of what Somalia can be in the future. Our success requires the support of our international partners, but most of all it demands the ownership and the commitment of the Somali people, which we are assuring. As we continue towards democratization, now is not the time for scepticism. We have laid out our plans, and we need to stand together to execute and deliver.

Mr. Antoine (Grenada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Our achievements and progress have been made possible by the determination of the Somali people. We welcome and acknowledge the strong support of our international partners and look forward to their continuing engagement behind our nationally led agenda. I acknowledge the commitment and the sacrifice of our Somali defence institutions and grieve the loss of our soldiers and security staff who died in pursuit of peace. I renew my commitment to serve the Somali people. Somalia is indebted to their resilience and perseverance in the face of extraordinary challenges. Somalis look forward to walking, together with the nations assembled here, towards a peaceful, prosperous future for the nation call Somalia. We are very much indebted to the family of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nikolić (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): I congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I am convinced that his international prestige and experience will make an important contribution to the crafting of sustainable political solutions to the new global challenges that lie ahead of us. I would also like to convey Serbia's readiness to address and provide unequivocal support to the resolution of priorities relative to climate change, an integrated global economy, international security issues and all other topics included in the agenda that we will actively pursue.

I should like to express my special thanks to outgoing President, Mr. John Ashe, for his efforts and successful work during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, which laid down the foundations for the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, as well as for his endeavours to strengthen the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

The sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when we mark an important anniversary, 100 years having elapsed since the outbreak of the Great War, a war which shaped the twentieth century. The anniversary was commemorated at different places, but, regrettably, no common ceremony at the highest level was organized in the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Serbia strongly supports the General Assembly agenda for the sixty-ninth session and sees itself as an active partner and participant in the implementation of United Nations development goals. The world is faced with new security, climate and socioeconomic challenges. We need to do much work together to ensure humankind's progress in the twenty-first century. Serbia offers its experiences and ideas for global management, so that we can ensure a better future for new generations all over the world.

Allow me to consider three of today's most pressing global challenges that concern not just Serbia but all of us — climate change, global security and deadly infectious diseases of vast proportions. I believe that, if not addressed wisely and systematically, those challenges could put the survival of future generations in jeopardy.

Socioeconomic interrelatedness accounts for the disappearance of the old division into "us" and "them". All of us, all States Members of the United Nations, share the same destiny and shoulder equal responsibility for the problems that directly face humankind. One of the urgent global challenges that we are confronting is climate change. At the Climate Summit 2014, in which I participated with great interest, we discussed the historic chance that we shall have at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015. Consensus among scientists indicates that the global temperatures in the twenty-first century will rise dramatically. Extreme weather conditions will increase, with a frequency that depends on the intensity of global warming. Inexorably, the effects of natural disasters aggravate the fragile economic situation in Serbia and the region of South-East Europe and make the struggle against poverty ever more difficult. That struggle remains the quintessential challenge facing the world today.

Activities aimed at alleviating the consequences of climate change are the imperative of our age. In determining binding measures, surely we should take account of the development needs of poor and underdeveloped countries. I am convinced that the Assembly shares my opinion that there is a need to act, as soon as possible, to improve adaptation systems and to establish mechanisms for lowering the risks posed by natural disasters. I therefore view this year as an opportunity to kick off intensive activities in devising climate policy and encouraging countries to commit to reducing carbon emissions. We have a historic chance to devise an energy policy that is sustainable and provides for substantive global action on climate change policy. I am convinced that we all share the view that it is urgent and obligatory to improve the adaptation system and set up mechanisms for reducing the enormous risks of natural disasters. Serbia wishes to contribute to reaching a legally binding, general consent on climate for all the peoples of the world. I believe that the Green Climate Fund should play an important role in the process of implementing the agreed principles. By 2020, it should achieve its ambitious goal and fulfil the commitments we have made for the sake of humankind.

This year, I witnessed, and my country was a victim of, extreme weather conditions in Europe. Unfortunately, Serbia and its neighbours in the region were subjected to natural disasters as a consequence of climate change. Serbia was and is vulnerable these days, all over again, to floods of biblical proportions. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the United Nations for its extensive and efficient engagement and cooperation with the Government of Serbia in the aftermath of the floods. In particular, I would like to thank French President François Hollande for heeding my call to convene a donors conference to help Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. I would also like to thank the European Commission, the members of the European Union, the Russian Federation, China, Japan, Belarus, African countries and the countries of the region for their assistance and engagement. Without their generous bilateral assistance, we would not have been able to help everyone in dire need. Short of the selfless assistance of Member States, we would not have been able to help the affected people, many of whom lost everything they had acquired during their lifetime.

The national priority of Serbia is to achieve a sustainable political solution on the question of Kosovo and Metohija. For Serbia, the only acceptable, fair and just solution is to reject secessionism and preserve the territorial integrity of every country, including Serbia. Serbia therefore is clearly committed to the quest for a sustainable political solution through dialogue with representatives of the Provisional Institutions of Self-

Government in Pristina. The political solution that Serbia advocates comprehends the interests of the Serbian, Albanian and other populations. It will be a durable political solution that is satisfactory to all parties, and we can reach it only through constructive dialogue.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is contributing to the process of European integration. We expect the European Union to continue to encourage, through its active engagement, an open dialogue and compliance with agreed-on obligations in order to strengthen mutual trust. Serbia has complied, responsibly and on time, with all the obligations it has undertaken to date regarding the implementation of the Brussels Agreement. I would like to point out that Serbia is open to continuing constructive dialogue with Pristina at every level.

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is the guarantor and the basis for action by all other international missions in Kosovo and Metohija. For Serbia, a reduction in UNMIK's mandate and competencies in Kosovo and Metohija is unacceptable. In its negotiations with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Pristina, Serbia proceeds from the premise that all solutions must be in accordance with the Constitution of Serbia and resolution 1244 (1999). That concerns questions having to do with the province's status, the position of Serbs and other non-Albanians in the province, and protection of the Serbian religious and cultural heritage.

Our approach to the search for a sustainable political solution for Kosovo and Metohija has broader political implications. I believe we can all agree that the creation of conditions for the enjoyment of basic human rights and minority rights would not only promote the return of the displaced population but would also provide a model for political dialogue and toleration, the assumptions of today's world and the policies of peace that the United Nations spearheads.

Creating optimal conditions for internally displaced persons to return to their homes is the key factor in the process of normalizing relations between Belgrade and Pristina. I would like to recall that everything began with the acts of terror committed by the Albanian minority in Kosovo and Metohija aimed at achieving their secessionist ambitions. Today, 15 years after the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999) — by which we ceded administration of the province of Kosovo and Metohija to the United Nations — the conditions conducive to returning internally displaced persons to Kosovo and Metohija have still not been created, something that is noted in the Secretary-General's regular reports on UNMIK's work and in the reports of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

Serbia has the largest number of internally displaced persons of any country in Europe, a total of 230,000. They must not remain mere statistics. They must not be forgotten. There are 58,000 refugees living in Serbia, 42,000 from Croatia and 16,000 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. I believe refugees deserve special attention from the United Nations and UNHCR. The marginalization of the serious problems that those vulnerable people face should be condemned rather than ignored. The issue of basic human rights is a universal one, respected by every State Member of the United Nations. Any hasty decision on the issue would be a mistake, since it could undermine the region's reconciliation processes, which are not yet fully formed, as well as the fundamental right of Serbs to return to their homes in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Serbia has taken a step forward into the future, and wishes to make an active contribution to global economic progress, the suppression of crime and corruption, and the quest for a solution to all matters of international security. Membership in the European Union is our foreign policy priority. Like any other form of international association, the European Union falls short of achieving ideal solutions and is saddled with its own challenges and issues relating to its enlargement, but it is still the best community of European States. Serbia's place is with its members so that it can fully modernize its society and State and further develop its economic capacities. The clear goal we aspire to is to build Serbia into a respected member of the family of European nations, and our progress in membership negotiations will contribute to that.

Serbia is preparing to assume the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) next year. That role and task present my country with complex, multilateral challenges, but we are ready for them, and we have been preparing in collaboration with Switzerland in positive and constructive cooperation. Serbia will use the OSCE chairmanship to encourage and strengthen mutual cooperation among the countries in the region. The Balkan countries have made immense progress in recent years and have developed substantial and comprehensive mutual cooperation. Serbia will make every effort to see that the process of reconciliation and cooperation and mutual respect is fully implemented throughout the region. The chairmanship will also be used to encourage those processes.

We are deeply disturbed and alarmed by the events in Ukraine and will do everything in our power to help find a peaceful solution to the problem and overcome differences peacefully. Our Slav brothers deserve peace and tranquil development, along with respect for those universal principles that should be accorded all countries and peoples and that are clearly defined in the Charter of the United Nations. Serbia respects the territorial integrity of Ukraine as a United Nations Member, and the equitable implementation of international law. I recall that some countries denied Serbia that right through their recognition and promotion of the independence of a part of the territory of Serbia — Kosovo and Metohija.

The principles of safeguarding peace and security, the peaceful settlement of disputes and crises and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States are the bases on which the Republic of Serbia will cooperate in the search for solutions to the various political and security challenges in the world. At the global level, therefore, we support all efforts by the United Nations and its Member States and by regional organizations to find diplomatic solutions to the world's most sensitive security issues. With its broad political experience and bold leadership, Serbia can contribute, through dialogue with friends, partners and Member States, to devising solutions to the disagreements that threaten to disunite the world all over again.

Serbia is making a concrete contribution to maintaining international peace by participating in United Nations and European Union peacekeeping operations. Thanks to that work and to our cooperation with allies and partners, the region is more stable than it was 15 years ago. I would point out that we support every initiative aimed at modifying and adapting peace operations to new security challenges. Serbia calls for strengthening regional cooperation and harmonizing approaches to the activities of peacekeeping missions.

Serbia's new policy has fostered sincere and fully transparent relations in South-Eastern Europe. That was particularly evident during the disastrous floods that struck Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The solidarity and magnanimity shown then set an example for the entire world. Today our region is teeming with investment opportunities, and a strong and peaceful South-Eastern Europe is synonymous with a strong and stable Europe as a whole.

Serbia has experienced acts of terrorism on its territory in Kosovo and Metohija. We therefore understand very well the security problems the world is facing. We firmly condemn every form of terrorism. We are ready to discuss any initiative that can contribute to strengthening the role of the United Nations in combating that global evil. Serbia has achieved significant success in the fight against terrorism, especially at the regional level, and is ready to lend its experience and knowledge to help strengthen other States' counter-terrorism capacities.

Serbia has never supported and will never support the language of ultimatums. We honour and respect the political and economic interests of all Member States, and our approach and actions in protecting our national and international interests are predicated on those positions.

Serbia most strongly condemns the crimes committed by the members of the extremist organization of the Islamic State, particularly the brutal murders. Such forms of terrorism pose one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and Serbia is committed more than ever to supporting international efforts in the fight against terrorism.

The rapid rise of the Islamic State and its ability to attract fighters from all over the world has caught the attention of the international community. One of the main questions facing the world is the problem of foreign fighters recruited by terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaida. According to research conducted by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, based in London, the most significant regions outside Western Europe and the Middle East for the recruitment of foreign fighters are the Balkans and the countries of the former Soviet Union. The data on foreign fighters for the Balkans vary: up to 140 recruits from Albania and as many as 60 from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The numbers are somewhat smaller from Macedonia — up to 20. From Serbia there have been three and from Bulgaria one, while the number from our province of Kosovo and Metohija is as high as 150. It must be stopped.

We face new global challenges that call for creative responses, global partnership and flexibility. Serbia is unreservedly committed to the principles of multilateral cooperation and to strengthening the principles and system of the United Nations. In that context, we consider the process of the reform of the United Nations system a historic chance to demonstrate our consistent support for the idea of building consensus among Member States on all key issues. Serbia is ready for constructive cooperation and respect for all participants in the dialogue, which will contribute to the greater efficiency of the United Nations system. Serbia supports the reform of the Security Council.

Serbia will do its utmost to help bring solutions to global security problems and sustainable development. Traditionally, Serbia has supported the multilateral approach in the field of disarmament and arms control, proceeding from the conviction that in a world of rising interdependence and complexity, common challenges call for common solutions.

It is with great concern that we follow the developments related to the rapid spread of the Ebola virus in the countries of Western Africa. We extend our condolences to the Presidents and peoples of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone for the great number of victims. The disease, unprecedented in the extent of its transmission and its high mortality rate, threatens to cause one of the biggest humanitarian crises of the world today and calls for immediate collective action, since it is a problem that belongs to all of us. It is very important in this situation that States Members of the United Nations have recognized the magnitude of the problem and have supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. Serbia is ready to join in and contribute to the collective effort with its scientific and medical capacities and in any other way.

The world has changed, but for the poorest it has remained the same. The greater instability of developing countries is a clear indicator that they continue to be in need of assistance. The international community must therefore pay appropriate attention to that group of countries, primarily through financial support, the development of new technologies and the training of human resources. Those are measures meant to lead to the eradication of poverty and the strengthening of institutions.

For Serbia, the top priority is poverty eradication, but the goals of inclusive education, health, gender equality, sustainable energy and, in particular, sustainable economic growth and employment are just as important. Jump-starting the economy is the mission to which we shall devote the greatest attention in the coming period, although always mindful of the issues I have mentioned, in order to ensure prosperity for all our citizens.

We must acknowledge the higher degree of socioeconomic interlinkage that exists if we are to come up with fresh ideas. We must design new ways to overcome the current crises in global management and study our options for formulating and implementing political solutions.

Serbia stands united with the leaders of the entire world in the endeavour aimed at bringing prosperity to humankind. That is a responsibility that we all share. Not only can we achieve much by working together, but we can achieve much more together. That is why the establishment of a united, global front around the idea of the common destiny and interests of humankind, which we all share, should be the first step that we, the States Members of the United Nations, must make as we attempt to solve new global challenges.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Martelly (*spoke in French*): Since the Charter of the United Nations was adopted in San

Francisco, the international community has made it a true act of faith in setting up a new international order based on the ideals and values that elevate human dignity and encourage sustainable development and solidarity among peoples. It is an honour for me to speak before the General Assembly, convened for nearly 70 years, to address key issues of justice, universal peace and security.

I take this opportunity to send Mr. Sam Kutesa my warmest congratulations on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. His proven experience on international issues and the United Nations system is a guarantee of the success of the work that will be taken up at this session. He can be assured of the full cooperation of the Haitian delegation.

I commend the remarkable work of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. I pay special tribute to him for his courage and commitment to the cause of peace worldwide. As humanitarian crises and conflicts between States threaten the stability and security of peoples of the world, the Secretary-General's leadership has repeatedly demonstrated that there is always a way to resolve our differences through dialogue, understanding and mutual respect.

That is why I encourage the United Nations to continue to support the good relations between the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and the peaceful and constructive approaches to establish lasting peace in East Asia and the East China Sea.

We in the Caribbean have chosen to take the path of dialogue with our neighbour to the east for the good of our two peoples and in order to preserve peace in the region. We believe in the power of dialogue. We are convinced that it is always necessary to engage in negotiation and productive discussions. We readily agreed to come to the negotiating table with our friends from the Dominican Republic to set out the real problens of mutual interest for the benefit of our two peoples and to resolve half-century-old misunderstandings. We welcome the fact that a number of agreements have been reached on issues that were not always easy to resolve. We hope to be able to continue on that path towards a better understanding between two States that share the same island.

Despite a challenging route, 70 years later it is clear that this common project that is the United Nations has lost nothing of its topicality and relevance. At a time when hotbeds of international tension persist, the enlightened Powers of our planet must unite to preserve peace, democracy, stability, human rights and development. In that context, in line with the new realities of this century, Haiti argues strongly for concrete progress in the negotiations for United Nations reform, particularly with regard to the enlargement of the Security Council to include new permanent members.

The example of inclusion must begin where the right to participation is a fundamental right expressed through the Charter of the United Nations. Our voice counts. Our leadership, being responsible, must be expressed through concrete and tangible actions when peace, the health of our environment and the health of our people are threatened. In that connection, I wish to pay tribute to our Cuban brothers, among other peoples of the world, who have supported African countries affected by Ebola.

As much as we have a moral responsibility to raise our voice against injustice whatever its origin, against fanaticism, to reject repression and violence in all its forms and to fight discrimination and prejudices that hinder solidarity among peoples, we also have an obligation to recognize and encourage efforts to unite people.

The legitimacy and credibility of the United Nations depends upon its ability to act quickly and respond effectively in recognizing the added value of each Member State. More than ever, problems must be addressed pragmatically. That is an urgent matter in these times of political tensions on a global scale and of the spread of some diseases that are just as devastating. Moreover, the international community is greatly challenged by the resurgence of a brutal and fanatical international terrorism in a new form. The United Nations is and remains today our best defence against those challenges through respect for the dignity of peoples and through the participation and inclusion of everyone.

Allow me to present the situation in my country, the Republic of Haiti.

The Haitian people are at a decisive turning point in their long march in search of stability, democracy and progress, towards the consolidation of democratic institutions established 27 years ago with the adoption of the 1987 Constitution. After more than two decades punctuated by disasters of all kinds, Haiti has made undeniable progress over the past three years in terms of consolidating democracy and the rule of law, strengthening its institutions and protecting human rights, reducing poverty and laying the foundations for sustained growth and long-lasting development. We are aware that the road that should lead Haiti to socioeconomic stability is still long. However, the obstacles, however daunting they may be, are not insurmountable.

In terms of security, the situation has improved to the point where Haiti has become one of the safest countries in the Caribbean. The Government has made great efforts to strengthen the professionalism of the Haitian National Police. I maintain and reaffirm my stance on the need for a gradual and orderly withdrawal of United Nations troops from Haitian soil. That process has in fact already commenced, along with the strengthening of the operational capacity of the National Police of Haiti, which will allow it to take over from the forces of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

I wish to make a plea for better coordination of the work of United Nations agencies with national institutions and for taking into account the real needs of the country.

With regard to education, 70 per cent of pupils in the first two years of primary school receive a free education. For the first time in Haiti, 5 per cent of the gross domestic product is earmarked for education. Today, the net school enrolment rate has increased significantly. We are working hard to reach the Millennium Development Goals, which are set at 100 per cent in this regard, as the Assembly knows.

In the area of health, we have stepped up efforts to reduce the incidence of diseases such as AIDS, malaria and vector-borne diseases. The significant increase in health centres across the country has improved access to care and led to a reduction in maternal and infant mortality. Maternal mortality fell from 350 to 157 per 100,000 live births per 100,000. Through our Ministry of Health, we were able to build and rehabilitate more than 200 health facilities. And to strengthen governance in health, we are committed to the ongoing training of our health professionals so they can provide better care and services. With regard to cholera, while assuming our duty to our fellow citizens, Haiti calls for a decisive commitment from the United Nations to contribute to the National Plan for the Eradication of Cholera.

With regard to the economy, major reforms have been put in place to improve the business environment. The increased flow of foreign capital and the number of tourists visiting our country are tangible evidence of the improving business climate in Haiti. We are resolutely focused on our goal of making Haiti an investment destination, not a humanitarian destination.

On the political front, Haiti will conduct free, honest and transparent elections as soon as possible for the renewal of democratic and constitutional institutions. That is a necessary step. Democratic rules require it, and I will uphold republican principles until the end. As Head of State, guarantor of the stability of institutions, I have spared no effort to find consensus among all parties and institutions involved in the organization of legislative and municipal elections. Despite the discrepancies, in the spirit of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, I am confident that together we will arrive at such consensus. I look forward to bringing my fellow citizens together around the table to provide that harmonious area marked by the purest ideals that the Haitian people have established for themselves, ideals that we remain firmly committed to.

I would like to reiterate the support of the Republic of Haiti to the fight that the United Nations is leading to eradicate poverty. While waiting for the summit to be held next year in which Member States will decide on the post-2015 development agenda, I can already express the confidence of my Administration in the sustainable development goals intended to replace the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Mendonça e Moura (Portugal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The world currently has enormous resources. Our challenge is to find effective ways and means to ensure that they are distributed in an equitable and just manner. I remain convinced that our commitment to reduce poverty and inequality throughout the world is necessary. It is in that spirit that the Republic of Haiti joins the international community to contribute its part to meet that challenge. It is suitable, therefore, that we heighten the effectiveness of the Organization and give it the necessary and sufficient resources in the exercise of that mission.

Our goal is for that truly to become the basis of a system of security and collective solidarity that is able to ensure the rule of law and to preserve peace and international security; a system able to prioritize basic freedoms and human rights; a system able to promote strong growth that is careful to respect the environment and development that responds to current needs without risking the future of generations to come. It is up to us, on the eve of the seventieth anniversary of the Charter of the United Nations, to transmit that new spirit, so indispensable to the promotion and defense of the universal values of which we are the custodians.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mori: I would like to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election to lead the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I wish to thank him and the outgoing President, Mr. John Ashe, for their leadership. I must also commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has more than measured up to the tremendous tasks associated with his high Office.

Allow me to extend my sympathies to the families of the victims of the tragic and appalling events that have recently unfolded around the world, from the passengers on Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 to the recent beheadings by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, to the victims of the Ebola epidemic and natural disasters. We will never forget those tragedies and the loss of lives.

I am humbled to speak in this hallowed Hall for the last time as President of my island nation, the Federated States of Micronesia. Like my predecessors, I come with great respect for this honourable institution. This global Organization is best suited to address and solve the pressing issues of our global family.

I have come to the United Nations compelled by the dictates of conscience. We are all stewards of God's creation here on Earth. The bounties of Mother Nature are priceless, and we all bear the obligation to sustainably manage them.

Over 30 years ago, small island countries brought the issue of climate change to the attention of the United Nations. Some Members have criticized us for focusing too much on climate change and sea-level rise, but those issues influence our every decision and affect every aspect of life in our islands. Across the globe, the deadly impacts of climate change on the environment are stark realities. Others can afford to speak of them as future threats, but we in small island countries are already facing the impacts, which are worse than science predicted.

Micronesia means "little islands", with atolls rising only a few feet above sea level. According to the *Fifth Assessment Report* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, human-caused climate change is leading to sea-level rise, more frequent and more intense typhoons and severe droughts. A small increase in the sea level would be a catastrophe for the atolls of Micronesia. Our islands contribute almost nothing towards the causes of climate change, and yet we face the brunt of its adverse impacts. Climate change threatens our food and water security, the health of our population, the health of our oceans and coral reefs, our biodiversity and the very existence of our island nations.

What are we doing about it? Collectively, in order for small islands to survive, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) advocates for limiting global warming to well below a 1.5°C increase above the pre-industrial temperature. That requires immediate action from all stakeholders. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) must not be asked to fight climate change by themselves. On that note, we support the recently launched World Bank initiative on carbon pricing.

Next year, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21), to be held in Paris, will establish a new climate change treaty, which will go into effect in 2020. However, the United Nations Environment Programme has identified a pre-2020 emissions gap. Therefore, AOSIS has also made an important proposal to the work plan on enhancing mitigation ambitions in order to close the gap.

Micronesia has made an equally important proposal to amend the Montreal Protocol to phase down the production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are powerful greenhouse gases. That action can reduce the global average temperature increase by up to 0.5°C by the end of this century. Reducing HFCs and other short-lived climate pollutants can reduce the rate of sea-level rise by 25 per cent. Near-term climate mitigation will give all atolls around the globe a chance to survive.

The Montreal Protocol's success and enormous potential to protect the climate was recognized in *The Economist* this week. The magazine has a separate editorial entitled "Paris via Montreal: The quickest way to cut greenhouse gases is to expand the Montreal Protocol". Indeed, the success of the Montreal Protocol in the next six months is our ticket to a successful outcome in Paris at COP 21. I commend the United States of America and China for continuing to work to fulfil their agreement to use the Montreal Protocol to reduce HFCs. I call on other world leaders to join Micronesia and adopt the proposed HFC amendment.

In the face of already occurring climate change impacts, the best small island nations can do on the ground is to try to anticipate and adapt to climate change and instil the best possible disaster risk reduction and response policies. Adaptation is therefore a priority in Micronesia's Climate Change Act, which was recognized at the recent world summit of the Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment. The Act implements our nationwide integrated disaster risk management and climate change policy. The goal of the policy is two-fold: first, to achieve economic growth and self-reliance within a framework of sustainable development, and secondly, to minimize the risks associated with all human-induced and natural hazards, including those associated with climate change.

Micronesia has also developed an agriculture policy to address food and water security and strengthen economic development. The policy also provides the basis for action to revitalize sustainable agriculture, while recognizing the major role played by traditional farming systems and the importance of climate-resilient crops. Other key national actions of Micronesia and other SIDS are reflected in the Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership and the Palau Declaration on "The Ocean: Life and Future".

In this International Year of Small Island Developing States, the United Nations has convened a number of important conferences whose outcomes must be incorporated into the post-2015 development agenda. In that regard, I stress the critical importance of implementing the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action — Samoa Pathway — the purpose of which is to stimulate sustainable development in SIDS through durable and genuine partnerships.

We note with appreciation the report by the Chairs of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and fully endorse the proposed sustainable development goals (SDGs). We rely on our development partners to assist us in undertaking the actions identified in the Samoa Pathway and in fulfilling the SDGs in ways that are appropriate for our peoples and our cultures.

Clean energy and energy efficiency are two of the key engines for advancing our sustainable and low-carbon development. Therefore, our national energy policy gives priority to energy efficiency and renewable energy. By 2020, the share of renewable energy sources will be at least 30 per cent of total energy production, while electricity efficiency will increase by 50 per cent. That will require harnessing sunshine, which we have in abundance, as well as renewable wind and marine energy resources. I call on our development partners to assist us in implementing our national energy policy, including through the SIDS Renewable Energy Initiative.

Our ocean and its resources are of paramount importance, but they are threatened by climate change and ocean acidification, which damage coral reefs and could alter the migration patterns of tuna, our most commercially valuable resource. Foreign vessels, which enjoy unprecedented returns from harvesting our exclusive economic zone, need to help us maintain the health, productivity and resilience of our ocean. Micronesia must also receive fair compensation for the value of its resources.

As part of a programme of sustainable use, we must reduce the amount of by-catch being discarded, bring it to shore and put it to good use. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) continues to threaten our ocean resources and undermines our economic sustainability. We all must abide by the rules. IUU fishing must be stopped.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have become a leading cause of death in the Pacific. Therefore, Pacific leaders have declared NCDs an epidemic. Such diseases are lifestyle diseases, but they are compounded by climate change, which destroys our food crops and contaminates our water supplies. Tackling that multisectoral issue requires broad cooperation and support.

Human trafficking is one of the most serious social diseases of modern society. It robs individuals of their dignity, particularly women and children. Profiting from human misery is despicable. Micronesia supports the eradication of trafficking in all its forms. Objective and transparent ratings of countries will help achieve that goal.

We urge the establishment of the "One UN" approach for the North Pacific. We are now benefiting from the United Nations Joint Presence in the region, but we need to increase its efficiency at the country level. The One UN approach is timely as we position ourselves to implement the Samoa Pathway and the post-2015 development agenda, and it will help us address our national priorities.

Despite the United Nations target of setting aside 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance, most developed nations fall far short of that goal. Small island developing States face unique challenges owing to our extreme vulnerabilities, including climate change. The need for financial and technical assistance from development partners is greater than ever, especially for human resources development and the capacity-building of domestic institutions.

Internationally agreed financial mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund must be fully capitalized and sufficiently scaled up to support the post-2015 development agenda. We applaud Germany, France and six other nations for pledging specific sums. We urge those countries and the other major economic Powers that are also the major polluters to deliver the funds.

My Government has liberalized its telecommunications system, and the World Bank is providing assistance in the form of grants for installing a state-of-the-art fibre-optic system in my country. That much-needed infrastructure will spur economic and social development. We continue to look to the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union, the Asian Development Bank and other development partners to help us accelerate implementation of that new system and provide for cyber-security.

The reform of the Security Council is long overdue. A reformed Council should reflect the political realities of today. It would be inconceivable to have a reformed Council without permanent seats for Japan, Germany, Brazil and India, as well as representation for Africa.

Micronesia is confident that the United Nations can maintain international peace and security. It shines like a bright beacon of hope for those suffering from the ravages of war. Micronesia condemns senseless killings, no matter where they occur. The Middle East is a specific trouble spot that deserves this body's attention. Peace can be achieved through mutual respect and economic stability, not by using civilian lives as shields.

Micronesia also looks to the United Nations to effectively address the global security threats posed by climate change. Micronesia has taken an active role in the international sustainable development and climate change negotiation processes. We will continue seeking solutions to those challenges, out of the conviction that it is our moral obligation to protect Mother Nature and her bounties. All countries must work together to protect our children's future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emanuel Mori, President and Head of Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Mr. Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Savarin: I would like to begin by congratulating His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. John Ashe for his leadership of the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, and to salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continued efforts to promote peace, security and development throughout the world.

Dominica is among six small independent States in the Caribbean that, together with three non-independent small island territories, constitute the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The OECS States are not simply small island developing States (SIDS), they are very small island developing States, and therefore among the most vulnerable members of the United Nations family. Twenty years after the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and 10 years after the approval of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, most of the commitments made to promote sustainable development in SIDS have yet to be delivered. However, we remain hopeful that the recently concluded third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia, Samoa, will have been a watershed moment for SIDS. We expect the draft outcome document of the Conference (A/CONF. 223/3) to create a new basis on which to address the implementation gaps that continue to stymie any movement towards sustainable development in SIDS.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government and people of Samoa on hosting a major international conference. Their tenacity, determination and commitment are a demonstration of what can be achieved by SIDS, despite the many challenges they face. One major outcome of the Samoa Conference was the historic establishment of an all-SIDS — that is, SIDS-SIDS — initiative aimed at creating an international organization to serve as a platform for the development of sustainable energy in SIDS, known as SIDS DOCK. On 1 September, a treaty formally establishing SIDS DOCK as an international organization was opened for signature. Twenty of the 30 members of the Alliance of Small Island States have signed on to the treaty. As Chair of the SIDS DOCK Steering Committee, the Government of Dominica wishes to thank the host country, Samoa, the other Member States that are signatories to the treaty, our partners — Denmark, Japan, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Clinton Foundation, the secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme, the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre — and the SIDS DOCK secretariat and all the volunteers for making that historic event possible.

Unfortunately, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 agenda have not progressed at a pace that those of us in the SIDS group would have liked. Almost 15 years since the Millennium Declaration was adopted (resolution 55/2), only a few countries in the developing world have registered tangible gains. The majority continue to wait for the promised improvements in their living conditions. Nonetheless, Dominica has been able to meet most of the MDGs, notably in reducing poverty, improving access to education, ensuring environmental sustainability and building strong bilateral and multilateral partnerships. Our progress in poverty reduction has been noted by the Caribbean Development Bank, which stated in its 2009 report on Dominica that

> "the level of poverty in Dominica has fallen from 39 per cent in 2003 to 28.8 per cent in 2009. Absolute poverty, as measured by the indigence rate, has also declined from 10 per cent in 2003 to 3.1 per cent in 2009."

Our achievements in education have also surpassed the targets set by the MDGs. Recognizing the importance of education to our development agenda, Dominica continues to make major investments in improving access to quality education for our people. To date, we can boast of universal access to education at the early childhood, primary and secondary levels, and access to post-secondary education is available to all secondary-school graduates.

Dominica has always been guided by the principle of the sustainable use of its natural resources and the protection of its physical environment. For those reasons, Dominica has been called the "Nature Island of the Caribbean". We therefore have much that we can share with the United Nations family on the subject of the sustainable use of natural resources. In our efforts to protect and ensure environmental sustainability and to rid our country of its reliance on fossil fuels for generating electricity, the Government of Dominica has invested, and continues to invest, in renewable energy.

Today about 20 per cent of the island's electricity needs are met from "clean" hydropower.

Additionally, however, the Government has been pursuing the development of the country's geothermal resources. To date, the Government has invested over $20 million in geothermal development. The first production and reinjection wells have been completed, and the results of the flow tests indicate that the geothermal reservoir has a capacity to generate sufficient electricity for domestic consumption and for export to the neighbouring French territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe. The first plant for purely domestic consumption is expected to be commissioned in 2016.

Dominica's development achievements in general, and the attainment of the MDGs in particular, have been realized through the strong, visionary and compassionate leadership of Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit and his Cabinet, complemented by our hard-working citizens and the kind cooperation of our development partners. Our partnerships with the European Union, the United States of America, Japan and other developed countries have all contributed significantly to the progress we have been able to make thus far. The recent approval by the World Bank of the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience, which will undertake a number of infrastructure projects designed to transform Dominica into a climate-resilient and low-carbon developing country and is expected, among other benefits, to positively impact agricultural productivity and food security in our rural communities.

South-South cooperation with partners from developing countries, notably the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Morocco and Venezuela, and from the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, has been able to complement the decreasing assistance from traditional partners. We embrace all our development partners and look forward to the deepening and strengthening of our partnerships for the benefits of all our people.

In spite of those achievements, we are a long way from where we aspire to be. The spectre of the deadly Ebola disease and the scourges of HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases has the potential to significantly impact our people and threaten the gains made so far by small island developing States. Therefore, that myriad of challenges calls for collective global action to protect the gains that small island States like Dominica have been able to achieve over the past two decades and to lay a path for development that is sustainable and people-focused.

Additionally, the impact of climate change remains an existential threat to the people throughout the world who call small island States their homes. The location, level of development and vulnerability of our islands make them very susceptible to the impact of climate change. Very often, we refer to climate change and its effects as a phenomenon that is to impact our global community at some future date. The unfortunate reality is that SIDS have already been suffering from the impact of climate change. The increasing severity of storms and hurricanes is becoming more prevalent, and with every strike the extreme weather claims lives and threatens our development efforts. According to a 2008 publication by the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Caribbean has the second-greatest risk of hurricanes in the world. The report also highlights the increased frequency of tropical cyclones in our region.

The islands of the Caribbean are also prone to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, torrential rains with accompanying landslides and flash flooding. We in the Caribbean have therefore been on the receiving end of the impact of climate change for decades. A case in point is the impact of Hurricane Ivan, a category-3 system that devastated the island of Grenada on 7 September 2004. Hurricane Ivan exposed the vulnerability that is inherent in SIDS. Twenty-eight lives were lost and 18,000 people were left without shelter, food or belongings. A post-Ivan study conducted by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States reported that:

> "The macro-economic assessment of the damages caused by Hurricane Ivan, which wreaked havoc on Grenada, inflicted damages totalling $1 billion, more than twice the value of that country's GDP".

In more recent times, on 24 December 2013, a time outside the traditional hurricane season, the Caribbean islands of Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were severely affected by a trough system that brought with it heavy rains and high winds. That slow-moving weather system left behind approximately $128 million worth of direct damage. Within less than 12 hours, each of those countries suffered significant loss: Dominica — $17 million, or 3.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP); Saint

Lucia — $19 million, or 1.4 per cent of GDP; and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines — $93 million, or 12.8 per cent. The indirect impacts, which include the loss of agricultural production and interruptions in other economic activities, such as tourism, would increase the overall effect significantly. The most devastating hurricane to hit Dominica in living memory was Hurricane David, on 29 August 1979, a category-5 hurricane that left the island devastated as if by war, resulting in 43 deaths and with all public utilities, infrastructure, 60 per cent of homes, roads and sea defences totally destroyed.

Such natural disasters affect the daily lives of our people and significantly retard our efforts to bring about social and economic development. We therefore call on all States Members of the United Nations to take immediate actions to approve a legally binding agreement to reduce the impact of climate change. The climate change agenda must be an integral part of the post-2015 agenda.

The creation of wealth and the generation of economic growth are essential for the eradication of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life of our people. However, economic growth and development should be inclusive and sustainable. The creation of jobs and the delivery of social services should touch the lives of all our people, especially the indigenous people, the elderly, the disadvantaged, the disabled, the vulnerable, and those people who are excluded from mainstream society. The development of agriculture, tourism, the energy sector and industry should therefore be inclusive and sustainable.

Dominica therefore joins the rest of the Caribbean Community in calling for development partners to conduct their macroeconomic and trade policies in a way that facilitates opportunities for SIDS to promote economic growth, shrink existing income gaps, reduce the levels of poverty and achieve their development aspirations. Those policies should include, but not be limited to, a change in the criteria for the graduation of SIDS from preferential access to multilateral concessionary financing. The new criteria must take into account the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS and the need for building resilience to the impact of climate change and the vagaries of the global financial, economic and trading systems. Therefore, any measure that inhibits any State Member of the United Nations family from becoming fully integrated into the global financial and trading system should be removed.

In that vein, the economic embargo against our brothers and sisters in Cuba continues to be of concern to us in the Caribbean. That unilateral action by the United States of America against our sister Caribbean island, whatever the excuses might have been 55 years ago, cannot be justified today, nor can the suffering of our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Cuba, as a result of their exclusion for 55 years from the world banking and trading system, be defended. It is well established that, whatever the objectives were 55 years ago, they are not likely to be achieved through the continuation of the embargo. The Government of Dominica therefore calls on the United States to heed the call of the General Assembly to lift the embargo against Cuba and to support the full integration of the Cuban people into the global financial and trading systems.

The embargo notwithstanding, the Cuban people continue to make a tremendous contribution to human development across the globe. For decades, Cuba has been training doctors, nurses, engineers and other professionals, deploying them to provide technical assistance to developing countries as part of its South-South cooperation. Cuba also offers professional training in various disciplines to thousands of students from all over the developing world.

Cuba continues to add its voice in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking in the Caribbean and the rest of the world. It is for that reason that Dominica fails to comprehend the continued listing of Cuba as a State sponsor of terrorism. We therefore call for the removal of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism. Our efforts in the region should be focused instead on combating the real threats to global peace and security.

Similarly, the events unfolding in Ukraine are a proxy tug-of-war between the European Union and the United States, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, on the other. The Ukrainian people are the victims of the contest, which is a throwback to the Cold War.

The United Kingdom, when confronted with the question of Irish nationalism in 1918, resolved the matter through the ballot box with a county-by-county referendum on the future of Ireland. Most counties opted for independence, but five counties opted for continued union with the United Kingdom. Three years later, the island was partitioned into the Republic of Ireland

and Northern Ireland, the latter remaining part of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom currently faces the question of Scottish independence. Once again, only last week on 18 September, the United Kingdom resorted to the ballot box to decide the matter. While the supporters of the campaign in favour of independence will be disappointed by the results, the real victors are not the supporters of the campaign for continued union with the United Kingdom but democracy itself.

With that experience, the United Kingdom is uniquely placed to counsel the European Union, the United States, Kyiv and Moscow about how to grant the people of Ukraine the same opportunity to decide their destiny for themselves, according to their regional preferences and without coercion either from the East or from the West. Such an approach would end the paralysis in the Security Council, thereby creating a real partnership among the United States, the Russian Federation and China and enabling the United Nations to fulfil its mandate to assist in conflict resolution, combat the greatest threats facing the world today, namely, armed conflict and terrorism, and create a more peaceful international community.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate to the General Assembly that the impact of climate change is a major threat to the development efforts and to the very existence of small island developing States. The incidence of severe weather conditions, including coastal erosion and sea-level rise, continues to impact island States in the worst ways possible. Our ability to survive depends not only on the individual and collective actions taken by SIDS, but also on the actions of the rest of the international community.

A legally binding outcome to the climate change negotiations is a critical component in a series of actions to be taken by Member States. That should be buttressed by a post-2015 agenda that includes poverty eradication, increased access to education and training, health care, potable water and sanitation, and promotes sustainable and inclusive economic development.

The outcomes of the third United Nations Conference on SIDS in Samoa should serve as a blueprint for the growth and development of SIDS. That should include the restructuring of the international financial and trading architecture so that the vulnerabilities and special circumstances of SIDS are taken into account. That new configuration will allow for the development of SIDS through sustainable agriculture, tourism and inclusive industrial development. However, such efforts must be propelled by sustainable energy that maximizes the use of renewable SIDS-appropriate energy resources in the most energy efficient manner.

Finally, I wish all participants in this sixty-ninth session every success in their deliberations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charles Angelo Savarin, President of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ivanov (*spoke in Macedonian; English text provided by the delegation*): I am greatly honoured to address this forum and to share with the General Assembly the views of the Republic of Macedonia on issues of global concern. In the current dynamic, hyper-connected and changing world, one thing remains constant — the need for greater predictability, a quality on which peace, security and stability depend, as well as global welfare and progress.

Humankind today faces many challenges, of which two demand our full attention. The first one relates to the natural world, and the second relates to the international order. The root of the first challenge is the human neglect of natural laws. The second challenge arises from the violation of international law.

Guided by the idea that man is the measure of all things, humankind has made a wrong calculation. We are competing in a race for progress and new discoveries that goes hand in hand with a race for the unequal exploitation of resources — a race whose only rule is that there are no rules. Everything is possible and everything is allowed, including the pollution of the air we breathe, the water we drink and the soil that produces our food.

As humankind, we were selfishly focused on immediate needs and desires. We forget that natural resources have been given to us in trust to preserve for our children. In opposing nature, we are undermining the foundations of our future. Our citizens, States and economies have already begun to pay the price. We will face a period of extreme weather conditions, when it will become ever more likely that cities will be flooded, rivers will dry up, crops will fail and the price of food will increase.

Natural disasters at the global level serve as loud alarms telling us that climate change is a new reality that is changing our lives and the lives of future generations. Recently our region, South-Eastern Europe, was hit by such a disaster and reminded of that reality.

The Republic of Macedonia is the first country in our region to have completed its third national report under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We have already defined the next steps in all key sectors of the economy and society at the national and local levels for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by promoting strategies and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy efficiency.

We welcome the initiative of the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, to take decisive and concrete measures to remedy two of the world's great miseries: increased global poverty and diminished access to basic resources, including clean water, education, health care and a clean environment.

Here at the United Nations, we are all one family; as a family, we should help each other to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. But we must focus on two things, that is, reducing global poverty and ensuring sustainable development.

Next year will be one of great expectations worldwide, including the expectation that a genuine synergy involving all the major challenges will finally be achieved, inter alia, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. We expect the post-2015 development agenda to include global, holistic, scientifically grounded, feasible and legally binding goals aimed at ensuring a safer world for our descendants. However, we should be aware that the natural balance is disturbed and that many things will therefore not be as before. We will need to learn to live in a changed world.

Just as the challenge posed by nature is a result of the human neglect of natural laws, the challenge to the international order arises from the violation of international law by some countries. I said before that we are all one United Nations family. And in every family there are rules of conduct and mutual respect. Families without such rules are known as dysfunctional families.

The Republic of Macedonia is strongly committed to respecting the Charter of the United Nations, which is one of the primary foundations of the purposes and principles of international law. The rule of law is incomplete and impossible without respect for human rights. As a member of the Human Rights Council, the Republic of Macedonia is committed, in spirit and with determination, to protecting and promoting human rights and the right to human dignity throughout the world. The Republic of Macedonia has achieved the highest standards of respect for human rights and the rights of communities worldwide. That is possible thanks to the Macedonian model of coexistence as a model of integration without assimilation, which is not based on tolerance alone, but rather on respect for diversity.

In fact, the human rights and human dignity of Macedonian citizens are being continually denied by one Member of the United Nations family and a member of NATO and the European Union. Identity and language are inseparable parts of our personality, of freedom of expression, of human rights. Those are universally accepted principles that should never be compromised. Respect for human rights, including the rights to self-identification and human dignity, represent the highest values of the United Nations and are among the political criteria for the Republic of Macedonia's accession to the European Union.

The country that is blocking my country is demanding the impossible, namely, that we give up the Macedonian identity, thereby violating the fundamental principles of the European Union in order to meet conditions for membership in it. That would force my country to violate a rule and betray the global family.

In 2008 at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, basing its position on international law, my country refused to change the identity of the Macedonian people as a precondition for its already well-deserved membership in NATO. On 17 November 2008, we launched proceedings against our southern neighbour under the auspices of the International Court of Justice, again acting on the basis of international law. On 5 December 2011, on the basis of international law, the International Court of Justice ruled that the obstruction of the Republic of Macedonia's integration in NATO was illegal and that international commitments had been violated. For years my country has tolerated unprincipled and illegal blockades, and we have done so because of international law — because we believe that only international law can provide predictability and certainty on behalf of world order.

By our example we have demonstrated in principle how other countries should respect international law. Even the International Court of Justice, in an almost unanimous decision, concluded that we had acted correctly. Despite that, the Republic of Macedonia is ready for a mutually acceptable solution under the framework provided by United Nations resolutions, the Interim Accord and the judgment of the International Court of Justice. The issue of identity has never been part of that framework, because identity can neither be discussed nor negotiated. I therefore urge the United Nations and the competent authorities to become engaged and to devote maximum attention to finding mutually acceptable solutions within the framework of international law.

Two years ago, I was at the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.12) and remember well that the session was preceded by the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels (see A/67/PV.3). The General Assembly debated the Secretary-General's report (A/66/749) entitled "Delivering justice: programme of action to strengthen the rule of law at the national and international levels". Two years have passed, and we are still debating. We are still waiting for rulings of the International Court of Justice to be respected.

Our southern neighbour continues daily to violate international law. It continues to violate the various 1993 United Nations resolutions on the subject, as well as the 1995 Interim Accord. It also still ignores the ruling of the highest legal authority in the world. But that ruling does not apply only to the State that blocks us, the ruling applies, erga omnes, to all member States of the international organizations that still block our membership. Every blockade in our European and Euro-Atlantic integration process undermines the international legal order. By tolerating the blockades, a dangerous precedent is created, one of mutual blocking and blackmailing that is motivated by narrow national interests at the expense of the collective interests of the European Union and NATO. Hence, dysfunctional families are created that do not respect the rules of conduct. Disrespect for the highest legal authorities implies an erosion of the culture of respect for international law in the world. Such an erosion suspends the rule of law and leaves room for anarchy.

For years, we have pertinently pointed out that, if someone pollutes the spring, then its flow and the entire watershed will also be contaminated. If someone questions basic human rights — the right to human dignity and the right to self-identification — then the rest of international law will also be challenged. We have warned of the violation of international law in the case of the Republic of Macedonia, but others have rarely listened. Today, the price we pay is higher. Everyone calls upon international law when others are expected to respect it, but they ignore it when they themselves must respect it. We do not want to follow the example of those who break the law, because we are aware of the consequences.

If we remove one link, one factor or one participant from an ecosystem, that can cause instability and unpredictability in its functioning. We live in a world and an age of global interdependence, a global ecosystem. When a State fails to comply with international commitments, it encourages others to do the same. Today we are witnessing the consequences of such behaviour. Under the conditions of an impaired international legal system, the world has been rapidly sinking into the dark areas of anarchic international relations.

The world order is in a latent crisis. The processes of global interdependence and subnational fragmentation have transformed our previous perceptions of the world. In less than a decade, we have experienced two major changes. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 shook the global political and security order, and the collapse of Lehman Brothers on 15 September 2008 struck the global economic order. The only remaining order of the world we used to know is the international legal order. However, the legal system has been challenged as well.

The Republic of Macedonia sees its future in NATO and the European Union. With its expansion policy, the European Union has long served as a beacon lighting the path for the States of East and South-East Europe towards the more advanced European family. We were recently informed that this beacon will go out of service in the next five years. If it does, there will be the danger of shipwreck. The region of South-Eastern Europe remains vulnerable. I want to send a message to partners in the European Union that by postponing its enlargement, the EU has been creating a vacuum in what has been historically the most porous geopolitical space. Sooner or later, that vacuum will be filled. That is why we need as soon as possible to integrate all the Balkan countries within the European Union. While the membership card is not that important for us, the necessary membership criteria and standards are important. In our case, the European Union's beacon has grown dim because of its toleration of a devaluation of international law, human rights and the right to human dignity, which provide the essential fuel that powers the beacon. In losing its light, the European Union is losing what has been most valuable — its power to motivate States to strive for even higher values, standards and criteria.

I also want to send a clear message to my region that in these circumstances, now is the time for Balkan countries to demonstrate maximum solidarity and unity in achieving shared goals — cooperation on such issues as integration, our economies, infrastructure, energy, environmental protection, terrorism and the suppression of organized crime. We must resist and jointly address those shared challenges. In a world that is rapidly changing, the need for greater predictability in international relations remains. Only international law can offer the reliability and predictability on which world peace and the progress of our countries depend. International law is the only barrier that protects us from a disaster within the international order, and international law has been constantly breached.

We are in this Hall today as the highest representatives of our countries in the world family. I am confident that most members of the General Assembly agree with those conclusions. But the question is, how many of us are willing to take action to change things. I wish that we were not in a situation where we could simply debate and draw conclusions over and over again. It is high time that we start with actions. This is the last call. We should ask ourselves whether the natural order has an alternative and what that might be. Our failure to comply with natural laws has led to accelerated climate change — to more floods, earthquakes and fires. The failure to comply with international law has contributed to increased anarchy in international relations and interventions against those who have flooded, burned and destroyed the natural order today.

Not long ago, in August, the sixth United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Forum, held in Bali, focused on unity in diversity. While the world has been talking about unity in diversity, radical extremists have become united in their intentions to destroy those who differ. As we speak, millions of faithful believers around the world feel the pain caused by narrow-minded individuals and groups imbued with religious fundamentalism. As we speak, the systematic destruction of individuals and communities is occurring. As we speak, hundreds of thousands are being persecuted. Their homes have been devastated, their temples destroyed and their past erased, and their future is in question.

Recognizing that terrorism cannot and should not be identified with any religion, nation or civilization, we strongly condemn mass atrocities committed by anyone anywhere. We commend yesterday's debate in the Security Council (see S/PV.7272). What we need are urgent measures. The Republic of Macedonia has already taken the first steps. Recently, we adopted amendments to the criminal code regarding foreign fighters, who are a real threat to the entire region. Everything that is happening in the crisis hotspots reflects on Europe, which has its own crisis hotspot now in Ukraine.

It is sad that in the twenty-first century we have witnessed tragedies in the Middle East and North Africa. It is sad that this is happening in Europe, in a year that has been declared an international year of peace. It is obvious that, on the centenary of the First World War, the lessons of the past have not yet been learned.

The majority of victims of the Ukraine crisis are innocent civilians. There have also been material losses. The Republic of Macedonia supports all efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability in that country. I am convinced that political dialogue and diplomacy will enable Ukraine to address the challenges and regain its path towards a prosperous future for its citizens.

The world is facing serious challenges, including natural disasters and political issues — both of which mask double standards. Double standards generate issues that introduce equations with many unknowns, leading to a world where the only thing we are certain of is that the future of our children is uncertain. Only respect for international law will ensure greater certainty, thereby helping to avoid storms in our dynamic world.

The Republic of Macedonia supports the reform of the Security Council as a significant part of the overall reform of the United Nations. It is a complex and sensitive process. We agree with the proposal to negotiate the actual text. At the same time, we stress that the text must receive maximum support from the membership and ensure respect for international law and international commitments and rules. Such reform must provide greater predictability in the world. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the opening of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, "We shall have neither peace nor development without respect for human rights and the rule of law" (*A/67/PV.6, p. 3*). Only international law provides the opportunity to solve the equation and thus to plan the future, based on security, stability and peace.

Young people continue to be the main victims of double standards and violations of the norms of national and international law by prior and current generations, as well as of natural disasters. They breathe the polluted air, drink the polluted water and eat food grown in contaminated soil. They will become the victims of systems of injustice unless we do something to change that.

In 2003, we initiated the first Forum of the Dialogue among Civilizations, which was held in Ohrid under the leadership of former President Trajkovski. The Dialogue among Civilizations, both chronologically and in essence, predated the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which was formed in 2005 at the initiative of the Governments of Spain and Turkey. Indeed, only through dialogue will we join together in an alliance of civilizations. The Brdo-Brijuni Process Meeting was recently held with the participation of the German Chancellor, Her Excellency Mrs. Merkel. An entire chapter of the joint declaration is devoted to youth. As President of the Republic of Macedonia, it will be my honour to organize, together with the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Irina Bokova, the upcoming Dialogue among Civilizations in 2015, which will be entirely dedicated to youth.

In the year when we are marking the centenary of the First World War, we recall the positive experiences of Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer in establishing the Franco-German Youth Office in 1963. That experience of cooperation among young people should be applied in establishing an office for young Europeans from all the countries of South-Eastern Europe, transforming our region into a Europeanized Balkans. We call on the leaders to devote greater time and attention and invest in youth. We cannot change our past, but we can, by changing the present, change the past of the generations to come. That is why it is necessary to educate young people about the importance of dialogue, which involves respect and the acceptance of diversity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Union of the Comoros.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Dhoinine (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by conveying to the United States authorities my delegation's heartfelt gratitude for their always warm hospitality in hosting this great annual event here in New York. I also express my sincere congratulations to the President and wish him full success in conducting the work of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. Finally, on behalf of my delegation and myself I renew our full gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his commitment to serving our Organization.

The current session — the sixty-ninth — is taking place at a crucial moment in the history of our Organization, a crucible of multilateralism and global diplomacy that has, over time, become an ever more precious and indispensable tool for peace and security in the world. The session is being held on the eve of our Organization's seventieth anniversary, which we will celebrate one year hence in this beautiful city of New York. We will celebrate it here, at a venue renowned for the discussions and ongoing dialogue that place humankind and the environment at the forefront of concerns, with a view to fostering peace in international relations. In the light of the wisdom and experience of its 69 years, our Organization must find fresh strength and vitality and renew its commitment to a world continually faced with challenges and threats that change and become more unpredictable with each passing day.

The current session also provides us with an important opportunity to carry out a comprehensive assessment of our Organization's work and undertake the preparations to ensure that 2015 will be the year of reform, on the occasion of our seventieth birthday. Clearly, as part of that process, we should take greater account, first, of new complications, such as those related to the extreme vulnerability of small island developing States, in accordance with the recommendations of the recent Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia. Secondly, we should work to ensure better representation for developing countries, particularly those in Africa, which today includes not only areas that are seeing significant economic growth but also some that are afflicted by great poverty and often bloody conflicts that slow their development and are an obstacle to their peoples' welfare.

Meanwhile, it is vital that the long-hoped-for reform of our Organization include ensuring that the Security Council takes on the role of coordinator in the fight against the new global scourge of terrorism. In any event, as a country committed to and involved in the East African Standby Force, the Union of the Comoros fully appreciates the Security Council's responsibilities in helping to promote, guide and supervise the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Central Africa, Nigeria and Mali, as well as Libya, Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and any country in crisis. All are sources of tension that undermine peace in various parts of the world and have become fertile breeding grounds for international terrorism. It is in that context, and especially in the wake of the recent and bloody armed attacks on our Palestinian brothers in Gaza, that I would like to stress the urgent need for a just and immediate solution to the question of Palestine, which, sadly, is almost as old as our Organization.

In order to maintain and build peace in a constantly changing world, we must focus unfailingly on conflict prevention, while continuing to support efforts to solve crises as they arise. Our community of nations has a duty to take the initiative on issues that may ruin our Organization's credibility if not dealt with fairly. That is the case with my country, which, admitted as a Member of the United Nations under resolution 3385 (XXX), of 12 November 1975, in affirmation of the importance of respecting the unity and territorial integrity of the Comoro Archipelago, consisting of four islands, still awaits the completion of its decolonization process. In that regard, in my address to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session (see A/68/PV.10), I discussed our new approach to reaching an agreement with France on a fair solution that is consistent with the principles governing our Organization.

In keeping with the commitment I expressed from this rostrum, I would like to inform the Assembly that the high joint council proposed by the Paris Declaration has been established. This monitoring body began its work in November 2013 and is preparing to meet again at the end of this year. At its second meeting, the issues it will address will include that of people's movement between the archipelago's four islands, in an effort to end the tragedies that afflict Comorian families daily — tragedies that generally go unnoticed by international public opinion but are deeply damaging to my people's collective consciousness. These are tragedies that are equally troublesome to the conscience of France, the great country whose humanistic values we share.

In other words, quite apart from the two countries' territorial dispute, it is extremely urgent that we end this human tragedy through a peaceful and committed dialogue between the two parties, which can only benefit from United Nations support. That is why, in the spirit of the Paris Declaration and to pave the way for building a renewed relationship focused on the future, I recently sought the support of the Indian Ocean Commission at the fourth summit for Heads of State and Government of that subregional organization, of which France and the Comoros are both members.

There, the Comorian Government put the emphasis on a spirit of harmony aimed at preserving the bonds between our peoples, while reaffirming the importance of respecting the principles of international law in settling this 40-year dispute.

The purpose of the Assembly's sixty-ninth session is to define a development programme for the post-2015 period, with, as its chief aims, the eradication of poverty and hunger and the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth throughout the world. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) unquestionably created a global covenant of solidarity for our nation's socioeconomic progress. Like many countries, and like small island developing States in particular, the Union of the Comoros has made significant strides towards achieving the Goals, including improving maternal health and women's participation in political and economic life, reducing malaria and infant mortality, fighting HIV/AIDS and ensuring equality in children's education. However, there is still much to do, particularly in the areas of food security, access to universal health care and the deterioration of the environment. Similarly, energy, sustainable agriculture and access to drinking water for much of the population are still matters for concern.

That is why, at a time when my country is negotiating entry into the World Trade Organization, we urge that the MDGs that have still not been reached be incorporated into our new sustainable development goals. We also call for strengthened strategic partnerships for development, the establishment of an equitable regime for international trade, the promotion of domestic and foreign direct investment and, lastly, greater mobilization and commitment in combating climate change. It is also vital to implement promptly the recommendations of the various climate summits, especially the Samoa Conference and the Climate Summit held here in New York on 23 September.

Many indicators over the past few years, such as the rate of economic growth in various African countries, give reason to hope for a better future for development on our continent. However, Africa is having to deal with challenges related to conflict resolution and multiple threats to peace and security that no country in the world can manage alone, without international cooperation and support. One example is Ebola, a virus that is devastating various West African countries, the alarming scale and speed of whose spread represent a global threat. We welcome the steps that many countries have taken recently to help contain and eradicate this epidemic.

It is on my belief in the crucial importance of international solidarity in meeting our peoples' ever-growing needs that I base my hopes of seeing our Organization successfully negotiate its own transformation after almost 70 years of existence. Indeed, it is by rising to meet the many current challenges and fully assuming the demands of an increasingly interdependent and complex world that we will be able together to open up ways of hope for future generations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Union of the Comoros for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ikililou Dhoinine, President of the Union of the Comoros, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Christopher Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Christopher Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Christopher Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Loeak: When the United Nations was founded nearly 70 years ago, it was created to fulfil the aspiration that peace and diplomacy could overcome self-interest and to ensure that, through effective cooperation, the world could avoid grave security threats. But the decades since the signing of the Charter of the United Nations have been marked by nearly as many failures as successes, and many of those failures could have been prevented by early action and stronger political will.

I am particularly concerned today about the recent events in Ukraine and the rapid spread of violent terrorism in Syria and Iraq, even though the Pacific Islands sit halfway around the world, a fragile region far away from the global super-Powers. The leaders of nations have in our hands the means either to respond with alert action or to turn our backs on a growing danger.

Climate change poses no less of a security threat to our Pacific shores, and, indeed, to the world. As a low-lying country, the Marshall Islands has no higher ground — nowhere to go — and we will not cede an inch to rising waters. Earlier this week, over 120 world leaders met in this Hall to signal our political will and our commitment. No one should take that lightly. Leaders simply cannot afford to play consensus games or to squabble.

Yet words and intentions alone do not meet the full challenge before us. There will be serious emissions gaps between what the world will do and what needs to be done to save my nation. Earlier this week, young poet and mother Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner from the Marshall Islands stepped onto this very same stage to urge world leaders to take action. Today, on behalf of the most vulnerable nations — those at the front line — I ask of the leaders of the largest nations, the major emitters, in Kathy's very same words, to

> "take us all along on your ride. We will not slow you down. We will help you win the most important race of all, the race to save humanity".

Like no other global challenge, climate change requires direct political ownership and eye-to-eye engagement with leaders. This issue, more than any other, will define the Secretary-General's legacy as leader of these united nations. I urge him not only to continue to show his commendable personal leadership, but also to use his good offices to help find creative political solutions.

Everyone — large and small, rich and poor — must and will take strong action on emissions. In that regard, the Republic of the Marshall Islands strongly supports the Federated States of Micronesia, the United States of America, and many other nations in urging a rapid global phase-down of hydrofluorocarbon gases under the Montreal Protocol. I will personally attend the Paris climate conference next December, so that my voice and that of my people can be heard.

Unlike many other fights, the huge global fight to address climate change is also a personal one for me. It starts in my own backyard, with my own seawall, built with my own hands, to push back rising waters, save my own future and the future of my children and grandchildren. But that is not enough. We face a challenge that is nearly beyond belief. As with so many other moments in the history of the United Nations, we have to ask whether leaders will respond to the climate threat with courage. Or will some nations, including some close friends of the Pacific Islands, slide back in their efforts, bury their heads in the sand and ignore an obvious climate reality? I hope and expect that at the coming Group of Twenty meeting later this year, the world's largest economies will address climate change and the economic consequences of inaction. The Pacific island countries demand no less.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Last month, nations around the world gathered in Apia for the third international conference on small island developing States. As hosts of the conference, the Government and people of Samoa showed the world true Pacific hospitality. As we have for decades, Pacific leaders have spoken firmly — in last year's Majuro Declaration for Climate Leadership, in this year's Palau Declaration on "The Ocean: Life and Future", and again in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway).

Our development needs are beyond urgent and must not to be put off for yet another year. While the SAMOA Pathway charts a course forward for international partnership with small islands, there is too often a mismatch between our national structures and complicated sources of assistance. It is my hope and expectation that the major announcements and partnerships from the Samoa Summit will not lose momentum because of poor connections in the delivery channels. Our needs are often modest, but the trickle-down of international assistance and global development somehow fails to reach our local communities and to meet our unique challenges.

In the follow-up to the Samoa meeting, starting this year I urge the Secretary-General, the international system and United Nations agencies to start thinking seriously about how to work more effectively with our unique challenges as island nations. As Member States design a post-2015 development agenda, it is important that we focus on a strong outcome that has the flexibility to accommodate the unique character of each nation. We cannot measure progress without specific benchmarks, but as a small nation we fear that having so many ambitions can be equivalent to having none at all. The answer is not to be isolated within a separate, unconnected island strategy, but rather to build the flexibility needed for so many nations to act as one.

I stand firm with my fellow Pacific leaders and nations around the world who have urged that there be a United Nations sustainable development goal on oceans. I am puzzled as to why some nations close their eyes to two thirds of the world's surface, pretending that the world's vast blue waters somehow do not exist. The Pacific Ocean and its rich fisheries are our lifeline. We are the custodians of our own vast resources on behalf of future generations.

We could introduce a step change in the world's sustainable fisheries and play our own role to address global food security. Distant-water fishing nations must engage us as true development partners and work with us to change the focus beyond their immediate national industry and towards a global responsibility. Recent progress on sustainable fisheries has become the defining story of the Pacific — it is our empowerment and our future. The oceans are an equally valuable resource for alternate sustainable energy, including ocean thermal energy conversion.

Everyone should participate on the international stage. The Republic of the Marshall Islands supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in United Nations specialized agencies and mechanisms, including the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as in key regional economic integration mechanisms. Furthermore, I call for Taiwan's involvement in the post-2015 development agenda and urge recognition of the important assistance provided to my country in health, education and energy. The Marshall Islands welcomes Taiwan's efforts to reduce cross-Strait tensions and urges States Members of the United Nations to recognize and encourage such progress.

As a former United Nations Trust Territory, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has a unique legacy, shared by only a very few in this Hall. It was the United Nations that helped set us on a path to independence, but it was also the United Nations that explicitly authorized the 67 nuclear tests conducted in our nation between 1946 and 1958. Our own history bears the burden and the contemporary impacts of those tests. Our suffering could have been prevented by the United Nations — if only its Members had listened. Like many other nations, the Republic of the Marshall Islands believes that awareness of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches and efforts towards nuclear disarmament.

Those facts speak for themselves and were recognized two years ago by the United Nations Special Rapporteur. We look forward to addressing those issues further during our participation in the Human Rights Council universal periodic review next year. For the survival of humanity it is essential that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances. The universal way to accomplish that is through the total elimination of such weapons. It should be our collective goal as the United Nations to not only stop the spread of nuclear weapons, but also to pursue the peace and security of a world without them.

This year, I look forward to a United Nations that better recognizes the true global challenges of today and moves beyond old political cobwebs into our dynamic century.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Christopher Loeak, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: I bring everyone warm greetings from the people of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am once again privileged to address this body. In my country we begin all formal addresses by conferring blessings of peace and good health on all present, so let me say *Kam na bane ni Mauri*.

I echo the sentiments conveyed by previous speakers in congratulating the President on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I am confident that under his able stewardship, our Organization will continue its work towards improving the security and quality of life for all members of our global community, in particular the most vulnerable. Let me also take this opportunity to acknowledge with appreciation the commendable leadership of his predecessor, Mr. John Ashe, for his guidance and stewardship over the past year.

I also wish to commend the unwavering commitment and hard work of our Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has served as an able navigator of our family's ship, steering the United Nations through the diverse and complex realities and the myriad of challenges facing our peoples and nations around the world. In particular, I wish to commend his sterling leadership and demonstrated personal commitment to the need to focus global attention on those who are most vulnerable and who are on the front line of the many major challenges facing us today as a global community.

We meet at a very critical time in the history of multilateralism. The global community is in the process of shaping a post-2015 development framework. We are hearing stronger calls for United Nations reforms, for reassessing the way we do things in our family of nations. The membership is calling for a move away from business as usual and for transformational changes. We welcome the theme of the sixty-ninth session — "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda" — as it aptly captures the call for changes by the membership.

Earlier this week, on Tuesday, we concluded one of the most successful conferences ever convened by the Secretary-General on climate change. We applaud the leadership and the Secretary-General's very positive initiative. Those of us on the front line of the impacts of climate change welcome the renewed focus and the rallying by the United Nations membership behind the Secretary-General's call for ambitious announcements and commitments. The real challenge, however, is in being able to translate those commitments and announcements into action.

Three weeks ago, Samoa hosted the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States. The United Nations and those who attended declared it a resounding success. We thank our gracious hosts — the Government and the people of Samoa. Those very successful conferences signify recognition by the United Nations and the membership of the need to highlight the special case of those on the front line of sustainable development, to refocus global attention to the prevailing socioeconomic and environmental challenges that continue to constrain efforts by small island developing States (SIDS) to achieve sustainable development. That is particularly pertinent now, as the international community is in the process of shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

The Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action provides a clear blueprint of how the SIDS want to move forward in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. The real test of the success of the Samoa Conference, however, is in the adoption of outcomes into genuine and durable partnerships that can translate into activities on the ground that will deliver tangible benefits to our people.

While SIDS heard the plight of some of the most vulnerable, other United Nations processes are talking about the graduation of those countries from the least developed countries category. We believe that there is a contradiction here. If we as a family of nations do not act and do not work in partnership with those on the front line of major challenges, whatever they may be, then we will have failed in our efforts. I would like to reiterate our deepest appreciation to the Secretary-General for his demonstrated commitment and leadership in focusing the United Nations and global attention on the plight of the most needy, in alleviating poverty, addressing the Ebola epidemic, raising the voices of youth and women and their participation in development, ending gender-based violence, promoting peace and security, and acting against climate change now.

As I have highlighted on numerous occasions in the past, including earlier this week, the issue of climate change remains the most single pressing challenge for us in Kiribati. Climate change is an existential challenge for low-lying island countries like mine, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, the Maldives and

Tokelau, and I again call for urgent global action to help those countries adapt and for international legally binding commitments to cut greenhouse emissions. The global community cannot afford to not listen to our stories and to the plight of our peoples. Our plight is the plight of the global community, further down the line. Everyone's future is on the line.

I have just returned from an Arctic expedition, to the North Pole — hence, my loss of voice. I am still overwhelmed today by what I witnessed with my own eyes. The melting of the massive sheets of ice in the Arctic region due to climate change will not only have severe impacts on the lives of people in that region but will also result in the demise of future generations in other parts of the globe, in particular our most vulnerable atoll island nations. It has been an eye-opener for me to spend time in the past week in polar conditions. It gave me a wider perspective of the immensity of what is at stake beyond our own immediate concerns. That visit to the Arctic region highlighted the stark reality of the very direct connection between the destruction of that polar region to what is happening to us in the equatorial region, and the very unlikely possibility of ever reversing that process once it has gone so far.

On Tuesday we heard the voice of a very talented young woman, Ms. Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, a poet from our part of the world, from the Marshall Islands. Her voice represents the apprehension, the concern and the voice of mothers from low-lying countries like ours who lament what the future holds for their children and their children's children. Surely, we as leaders and the mothers like Kathy and millions of others around the world share, or should share, the same ultimate goal — to leave to our children and grandchildren a future that is better than what we inherited from our forefathers. We from Kiribati salute Kathy for reaching out and for touching the hearts of leaders who heard her speak. May she touch many hearts and move many more hearts.

The very sad reality is that we are just not on course to achieve that. It is glaringly obvious that we need to do things differently. We owe it to those whom we represent — our people. For us, climate change is not an event in the future. It is an event that we are dealing with today. We simply cannot talk of sustainable development without talking about climate change. Earlier this week, I appealed to fellow leaders, and will do so again today, for all of us to work together against climate change and to move towards binding international agreements, towards a clean energy future, a healthier greener future for our children and a healthier, greener home for our one planet, Earth.

What are we doing? Let us accept full responsibility for our own development to improve the well-being of our people into the future. We are determined to achieve that by finding national solutions to overcome the enormous development challenges that constrain our efforts. My Government has mainstreamed sustainable development principles into our national development plan, policies and strategies. Climate change and adaptation measures are integrated into our national budgeting process and development programmes to strengthen disaster risk management. We have adopted an inclusive, whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach aimed at addressing climate change impacts and strengthening our resilience.

Our strategy for migration with dignity is an investment in the education of our people and upping the skills of our young population to equip them with the educational qualifications and employable skills that will enable them to migrate with dignity to other countries as a matter of choice and, in the worst-case scenario, when our islands can no longer sustain human life.

Last July, along with other frontline low-lying atoll island States — Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Maldives and Tokelau — Kiribati initiated the establishment of the Coalition of Low-lying Atoll Nations on Climate Change (CANCC). The Coalition held its inaugural meeting in Tarawa in July and produced an outcome document that embraces the Coalition's goals and vision for building the resilience of our people in the face of the challenges of climate change. The initiative is prompted by the concerns we share regarding the increasing severity of those challenges and the slow pace of global action to address them. Our Coalition of nations continues to support the ongoing negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but we also emphasize that urgent action must be taken now to assist our countries and all vulnerable communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The Coalition initiative demonstrates our political commitment and determination to find innovative solutions to the threats we face from climate change. We are looking at building up our low islands and climate-proofing our infrastructure, and at our development efforts to prepare and build the resilience of our people in the face of the challenge.

We cannot do this alone, and we acknowledge the support of our development partners and regional and international organizations that have assisted us and continue to support our efforts to address the challenge of climate change. However, much more remains to be done, including making climate-financing facilities more accessible and flexible, as the solutions and options for facing this challenge vary from nation to nation.

The ocean plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development of my country. Our vision for achieving sustainable development hinges on the blue economy — on the conservation and sustainable management of our marine and ocean resources. While we in Kiribati have been labelled a small island developing State, we are in fact a "large ocean" State that spans an ocean area of 3.5 million square kilometres. The ocean has been an integral part of our life since time immemorial. While it now poses a serious threat to our survival from sea-level rise, it also provides immense opportunities, not only as a source of daily sustenance, but also as a means through which we can realize sustainable development and achieve livelihoods for our people.

Our exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is one of the largest in the world and is home to abundant tuna resources that provide rich fishing grounds for our distant fishing partners. We estimate that the total annual landed value of the fisheries industry in our EEZ is approximately $4 billion. Yet only 5 to 8 per cent of that comes to us as resource owners, through licensing fees. We have to ask, where is the equity and fairness in that?

There is a need to review and restructure the nature of public and private partnerships in the fishing industry. A more equitable partnership based on mutual respect, goodwill, fairness and accountability will go a long way in providing an enabling environment for sustainable development.

My Government is working to maximize the returns from our large fisheries resource through value-adding fisheries development, including on-shore processing. Our limited capacity in terms of capital, technical know-how, a lack of infrastructure, distance from commercial and trade centres and air and sea transport challenges stands in the way of our progress towards that development aspiration. Direct foreign investment and genuine partnership are therefore a way forward in that regard. I am confident that such partnership, forged around an equitable distribution of gains, will be the development model going forward, with mutual gains to be made.

Human activities have been responsible for the accelerated degradation of our global environment, in the pursuit of short-term economic gains without due regard to the health of our oceans and our environment. Never in human history has the health of our oceans and planet Earth been so challenged. We all have a shared responsibility and obligation with regard to the protection of the ocean from further degradation and the sustainable management of its rich biodiversity.

My country recognizes that shared responsibility and, in 2008, established the Phoenix Islands Protected Area (PIPA) in partnership with Conservation International and the New England Aquarium. UNESCO has inscribed PIPA on its list of World Heritage Sites. In January 2015, we will completely close off the Phoenix Islands Protected Area to all commercial fishing activity across an area of more than 410,000 square kilometres, representing 11 per cent of our total EEZ — about the size of the state of California.

PIPA is a rich fishing ground, so its total closure on 31 December this year will entail loss of much-needed revenue for Kiribati from fishing licence fees. For us, it is a major but necessary short-term sacrifice for the long-term health of our ocean and for sustaining fish stocks for global food security. It demonstrates our political commitment to the importance of marine conservation and the sustainable management of marine resources. It is our contribution to humankind and the common good of all.

But the announcement of complete closure of this vast marine protected area will amount to nothing without monitoring and enforcement. We have therefore established a PIPA trust fund to support our national efforts in managing PIPA and monitoring that vast marine protected area. We thank those who share our vision and have contributed to the fund. We encourage our partners who have not yet done so to join with us in that massive undertaking.

The challenges we face in the twenty-first century have taken on a new dimension. It is no longer a fight to save a species here and a collapsed stock there; the fight has become larger. It is now about how to ensure the survival of whole peoples — communities, villages, cities and nations. Entire ecosystems hang in the balance, the ecosystems that provide us with the air we breathe, the water we drink and much of the food we eat. It is time to view our global development in a whole new way. It is time to change business as usual. Indeed, a paradigm shift and transformational development approaches are necessary, starting from within our own nations and moving out to regional and international multilateral processes, institutions and partnerships.

It is high time we recognize that the new challenges require that we draw on all the resources available to the global community. Development and global challenges do not belong to Governments alone. Let us bring in our youth, our women, civil society, the private sector and our traditional institutions. Let us be inclusive. Let all those who have a contribution to make make it.

We welcome the inclusion of Taiwan in the international processes of the World Health Assembly. We hope that a similar inclusive approach will prevail in respect of our other international institutions and the United Nations processes, where Taiwan and all those that can participate and contribute meaningfully for the good of humankind can be brought in to do so.

We join in the broad international condemnation of criminal extremism and express the hope that such destabilizing tensions in Europe, the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere can be settled through peaceful means. As distant as we think we are from the epicentres of such events, they nonetheless impact on us in a very real way in our part of the world.

In my country, even before the advent of climate change, the atoll environment was indeed harsh. Life on the low-lying atoll islands has always been difficult. We have always worked on the principle of working together as part of a community on the premise that there will be some challenges that are larger than us and need collaboration. The age-old test of our resilience and our strength as a community is defined by the well-being of the weakest member of our community. For us, sustainable development must be inclusive. It requires sincerity, goodwill, respect and the willingness to move a little more slowly so as to assist and bring everyone on board in order to move forward together.

I would like to bring those principles to the United Nations. The pursuit of sustainable development and lasting peace and security calls for and requires sacrifice. It requires inclusiveness. It requires collective and decisive action. It also requires political commitment and political leadership from all of us here, for the time to act is now.

On that note, I leave members with the traditional blessing: may health, peace and prosperity be with us all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President, Head of Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.